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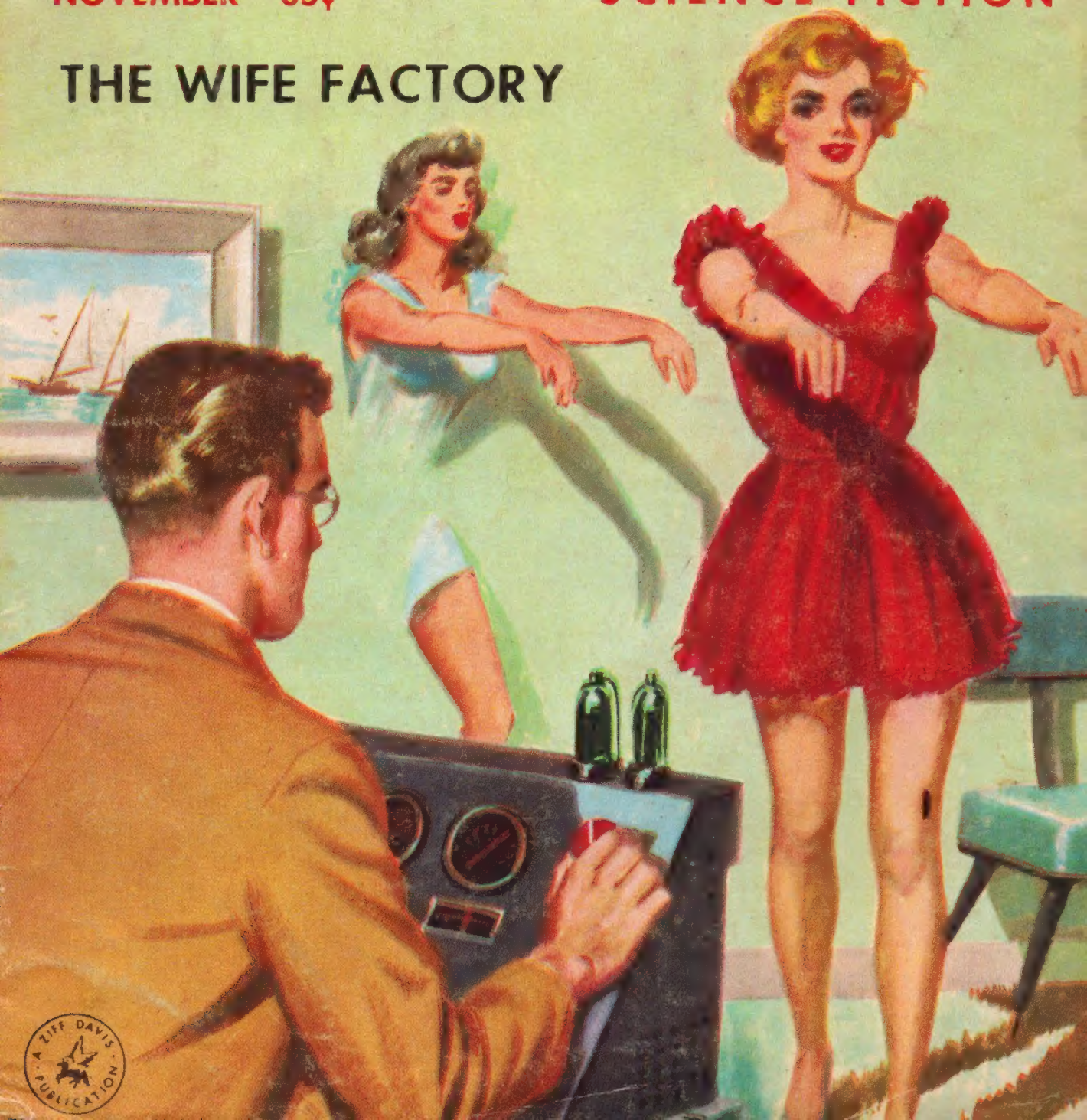
THE WIFE FACTORY



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BY THE EDITOR

Do you or any of your friends want a fine, well-preserved Egyptian mummy? According to the *New York Times,* there is one over at the Brooklyn Museum that's hunting for a home.

It seems the mummy was purchased for its shroud and wrappings and with these obtained, the museum doesn't want the mummy cluttering up the place.

So they decided on burial in the backyard, only to find out that one doesn't go around burying bodies without a death certificate. They've not only got to be dead but you've got to prove it even if they departed 3,000 years ago.

Thus, burial appeared to be out because the attending physician in this case could not be reached.

Next, the museum authorities bethought themselves of presenting friend mummy to some small museum where he would be appreciated and given a good home.

But complications multiplied. You not only can't bury a body without a certificate of death, you're also prohibited from shipping one around the country without same.

So the museum people, seemingly stuck with a non-rent-paying tenant, will probably look kindly on any outside bids for ownership. Only one thing—when you come after your mummy, bring your own death certificate.—PWF

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FICTION

THE WIFE FACTORY
By Clyde Mitchell..... 6

CALL HER SATAN
By E. K. Jarvis..... 40

WORLD OF TRAITORS
By Rog Philips..... 56

THE COSMIC TRAP
By Gerald Vance..... 74

TOOL OF THE GODS
By Lawrence Chandler..... 92

WHO STOLE CARNEGIE HALL?
By G. L. Vandenberg..... 102

FEATURES

LOW MAN ON THE ASTEROID
By The Editor..... 3

BOOST YOUR I.Q...... 119

THE BOOK RACK
By S. E. Cotts..... 122

ACCORDING TO YOU...
By The Readers..... 125

IT SOUNDS FANTASTIC, BUT... 130

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THE WIFE FACTORY

By CLYDE MITCHELL

The NeuroThrob was Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton's contribution to national defense. But the "secret weapons" it produced were the kind that would cause invading armies to come running from all corners of the world.

SITTING on the curbstone, Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton munched the candy bar and tapped his gold-headed walking stick in precise rhythmic co-ordination.

As a more than slightly attractive woman—of perhaps twenty-nine or thirty, with magnificent legs—passed, her eyes riveted farther down Fifth Avenue, Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton swiveled abruptly, and thrust his walking stick between her ankles. The woman stumbled, tripped and spilled wildly onto the sidewalk, revealing a handsome set of thighs.

"Yoiks!" the Lord chanted,

Lord Yardley-Taunton suddenly

thrust his cane between the girl's ankles. The results were spectacular.

wide spaniel-brown eyes turned to the heavens, his thick, well-tended mustache twitching with ill-concealed accomplishment. "Number four today!" And he stared openly at the attractive woman's magnificent, exposed legs.

The woman's chic platter hat had slipped down rakishly over her right eye, and now as she turned a wrathful stare at the Lord, her appearance was more that of a cornered small animal—a gopher, perhaps, or a marmoset—than an irate human. Her voice came out croaking, and as her anger mounted, the Lord flicked her skirt down with an indifferent movement of the walking stick.

Had she been in any condition to faint, the woman would have done so gladly. As it was, she merely turned the redder.

From nowhere a scrawny policeman erupted, and bore down on the grounded female, and the Lord. Who now sat sedately licking tiny patches of chocolate from his fingertips, the candy bar having been summarily dispensed.

"Maniac! Spalpeen!" the cop shouted. "I saw whatcha done! I saw it, I saw it, here lady let me help ya up." He slipped his wide hands under her shoulders and strained hugely, trying to raise her. She was a magnificently-proportioned young woman; he was a scrawny cop; he strained in vain.

Finally, sweat standing out like raindrops on his upper lip and temples, he let her slip back with a tiny thump, and grinned weakly. "Are you okay, lady?" he asked by way of reparations.

She turned her head up, peering out owlishly from under the platter hat, and glared at him with utter malice. "Drop dead!" she snapped in a nasal Bronx accent.

The cop, as though realizing in this direction lay only defeat and eventual embarrassment, turned his wrath upon the Lord, who sat calmly watching the cars pass, counting the New Jersey plates.

"Hey, you, c'mon, I'm takin' you in!"

The Lord did not level his gaze on the cop. In point of fact he did not even turn around, but merely shrugged himself within his tweed jacket and conservative weskit, and muttered thickly, "You, sir, are a superb ass."

The cop, hearing this, flew into a maniacal rage, and would have beaten the Lord to death at that precise spot and moment, had not a slim,

broad-shouldered man with blonde hair come running across the Avenue. Waving his hands madly, as though to stop an express train about to run over his child, he ground to a stop between the cop and Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton.

"S-stop," he ratcheted, his breath see-sawing in and out raggedly, "he's all right, h-he's just a little s-sick, Officer!"

"Now who the hell are you —oh, sorry lady—and what the cushlamarochee d'ya want here?" His attempts to imbue his Croatian accent with Irish imprecations was a decided, dismal failure, and for a second he looked chagrined. But the blue suit and badge he wore renewed his courage, and he thrust forth his sunken chin with abandon and surliness. "Eh? Eh? What ya want?"

"I'm Ernie Higgenson," he explained, thumbing his glasses a quarter inch higher on the bridge of his nose, "and this is Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton. You *can't* arrest him! He hasn't wired the NeuroThrob completely. I've been searching for him for over two hours. He's *got* to get back to the apartment and—"

"What the hell—oh, sorry lady — are you gibbering about?" the cop screamed an interruption. "I don't give a blarney if he's King Saud! He's goin' to the pokey right now!"

The Lord murmured, "Peasant . . ."

The woman still sat, legs wide, hat askew, watching each new development with obvious interest.

"You *can't* arrest him, he'll—"

"He'll *what?*" the cop demanded aggressively.

"I'll declare war on the United States," the Lord mumbled, swatting at a pigeon that was persistently dive-bombing his bowler hat.

"You'll *what*?" the cop repeated, but this time with incredulity like a toga wrapped about himself.

"Damnable upstart colonists, anyway," the Lord spat. "Where are you from, now that I think of it?" the Lord asked the cop, without expecting an answer. He had not as yet turned to face the cop, but remained sitting on the curb.

Without apparent volition, the cop answered, "Croatia, huh," as though he were trying to confirm his birthplace.

"Won't even bother declaring war on them," the Lord mused absently, "destroy

them over the weekend. Upstart clod!" He went back to observing the street, and the New Jersey licenses.

Ernie Higgenson took the crook of the cop's arm, and using it as a lever, propelled the officer away from the man still sitting on the curb. "Look, Officer," Ernie said with deep concern, "this man is one of the greatest inventors in the world. He is now under simultaneous contract to Westinghouse, General Electric, RCA Victor and the U. S. Army . . . now you can't put a man like that in jail."

"I can't?" the cop asked, perplexed. "I can so!" he jumped back with adolescent certainty. Though lines of doubt criss-crossed his forehead.

"You can't possibly," Ernie impressed him, "they'd have you shot for treason or something. Now you don't want that happening to you, do you? Think of your wife, and those touseled-headed cherubs at home—just think—"

The cop *was* thinking. His thin face worked as his eyes narrowed, and his head tilted up slightly as though he were looking toward a vision. Then he shook himself and his face grew dark aagin. "I'm a bachelor!"

"All the more reason," Ernie leaped at him with it. "Why should you be condemning to unhappiness the woman you might marry, and to never-being-born the children you might have had. Oh, the horror of it!" He flapped the back of his hand to his forehead in mock consternation.

The cop was being meditative.

"You say this character is important?"

Ernie made the Boy Scout honor salute, and said goldenly, "He is the *most* important!"

The cop rubbed the point of his thin jaw, and waggled his billy club at the Lord. "Well, I dunno . . ."

"Leavenworth Federal Prison," Ernie intoned, absently, talking to himself. "Black bread and water. Pumpernickel and goat's milk once a month. No sleep, terrible, terrible—" He murmured off, watching the cop from behind lowered eyelashes.

"Okay," the cop decided sullenly, suddenly, "get him the hell outta here—oh, sorry lady—and if he ever hits my beat again, I'm gonna make sure I put the spalpeen in the can! Now get!" Coming from him, scrawny as he was, it was not a very propellant phrase. But Ernie Higgenson

walked to the curb, and prodded the Lord in the back with his knee.

"C'mon, Lord Upton, we goofed off long enough; there's work to be done back at the apartment. The Neuro-Throb hasn't been wired yet, and you *know* the radiation count in this area is just right for the tests. Come *on*, Lord Upton!"

Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton heaved to his feet with a bitter sigh. He was a round, dapper, mustached man in his late fifties, with impeccable taste in clothing, and a bite of flush to his cheeks. Healthy, and snappy. "I'll damned bloody well declare war, is what I'll do!" he shouted at no one in particular.

"Now shut up, and come on along, dammit," Ernie reprimanded him.

As they started to walk off, down Fifth Avenue, the cop stopped them with a word. "Hey!" he yelled.

Ernie turned, though the Lord would not deign to recognize the cop's existence.

"What is it?"

The cop gestured at Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton. "Can he—I mean, *would* he—what I mean, is he *capable* of starting a war?" He looked worried.

Ernie confided seriously, "Officer, if he wanted to, he could destroy the entire city of New York, the United States, and more than likely, the Earth, too, if he got in a bad mood." He turned, took the Lord's arm, and walked quickly away.

The cop stood scratching the back of his neck with his billy club. "Well, I'll be *damned!*" he snorted. Then, "Oh, sorry, lady."

She remained seated, staring at him helplessly . . .

THE apartment was painted in an aqua tone that was quite restful. On the walls hung a splendid assortment of contemporary paintings, in the main depicting pastoral scenes, boating sequences, wild life, and occasionally a flower woman carrying her blooms in a huge wicker basket.

The pile rug was a light green, and the furniture was more-or-less modern, with no great care given to style, but much awareness of comfort and the shape of the human body. The room was clogged with scientific apparatus. In the small alcove between living room and kitchen, a weirdly-stringed mechanism that looked like the cross-breeding of an oscilloscope

with a harp, crouched shiningly, its dials dead, its face quiet. From the ceiling—where a metal plate should have supported a light, but instead had been altered to hold a heavy, brass ring—another machine hung. It was a large, crystal-faceted ball, with a needle-tip protruding from the bottom, at the end of which was yet another ball, a replica of the parent. It spun lazily at the end of the brass ring. Banks of dials and computer consoles spotted around the room, were buzzing, spattering, chuckling and chittering, while one floor-to-ceiling panel completely covered with resistance dials in little windows sent glowing green lights toteing up and down its face.

Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton sat sprawled in a chair that had been designed to tilt back and lift the feet up. The chair had been bolted in a fixed sitting position. The Lord had always contended Man was not developed and evolved to lie on his back, feet higher than head.

"You've got to stop doing things like that, Lord Upton, it makes one helluva impression, you know." Ernie Higgenson chided him ruefully, from his position behind the portable control panel of the NeuroThrob. He adjusted a few dials on the panel, and wheeled it out of a shaft of bright sunlight coursing through the window.

"Balderdash!" the Lord mumbled, stroking his handsome mustache. "Balder and dash! Uncouth country. Women too beautiful to be decent, officials all bumbling oafs!"

Ernie looked skyward, and sighed deeply. Since he had been hired by the Lord, five years before, he had become more than a technical assistant. He had become a watchdog and a valet and a companion to the older man. But it was hard work.

Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton was that rarity in engineering circles, the mechanism-empath. He instinctively knew where to fit pieces together, where to solder and when to bolt, and how to arrange the equipment so that it performed the function he desired. Though he was totally ignorant of scientific method, equally as ignorant of theory and tradition, there was nothing he could not do with a machine. He seemed to *feel* the capacities of the steel and wire and solenoids, and by what might be termed a crude "language" of the hands, he was able to extract

from his set-ups, the action he desired.

He was, in short, a mechanical wizard; an untutored genius.

Unfortunately, he was also mad as a hatter.

That he had come into a tidy fortune at the age of fourteen had not helped sublimate his eccentricity. He was wealthy enough, titled enough, and needed by research enough to do almost anything, and get away with it. The tales of his madcap and brilliantly-scientific escapades were the talk of the State Department, and each of his adventures was kept in a secret file in the Pentagon. Though one of the most brilliant scientific designers in the world, he would not suffer himself to be bodyguarded, utilizing the services of only Ernie Higgenson as liason, beast of burden, guard and general all-around toady. Ernie did not mind; he was a part of the Lord's world—and it was above all else a fascinating world—as he had never quite been a part of the outside world.

Ernie had come from Parsons, Kansas—and still spoke with a strong Midwest accent—where he had been the third wheel-man on a large machine which sifted grain into size and quality. After having stumbled on a quite brilliant method of operating the machine with only two men at the wheels, he was fired—having done away with his job—and found himself at loose ends.

Parsons, Kansas did not hold much for the young man of earnest endeavor. So Ernie withdrew his entire savings, and applied for entrance to Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was accepted, and went through the curriculum with astonishing ease and facility. He graduated, and found himself no better off than when he had left Parsons. He was still an earnest young man—with a brilliance and facility in the area scientific—but without a job.

After the usual running gamut of odd jobs, he met the Lord. Ernie had been a busboy in the Broadway and 47th Street Automat in New York City, and had seen a middle-aged, very British gentleman scribbling formulae on the micarta tabletop by the window. He had managed to steer himself nearer, and saw that there was a fantastic concept embedded in the doodlings, but they were being handled without any sort of rigor or progression.

"No, no, not pi f over gamma 4," he had said, seizing the pencil from the mustached Englishman's hand, "like *this*!" And he had proceeded to outline the equation to its logical denouement. The Lord had stared up at the handsome, blonde busboy, and shortly thereafter, had hired him to work. It had been five years, and this afternoon's fit of depression and perversity on the Lord's part was nothing new to Ernie Higgenson.

"But you've got to stop running off like that, Lord Upton," Ernie chided him strongly. "You've got to pay more attention to your research. Now look at this," he gestured around himself wildly, at the heaps of equipment, "not one connection made between all the units. How the devil are we supposed to have the NeuroThrob ready for the tests, if we don't get to it now. You know the radiation count is going down every day in this area.

"If you continue to dawdle, we'll have to move all this equipment to the next test area. And that's . . ." he paused, moving to the clothes closet and opening the door. Inside was a large map on rollers. He rolled it out and finger-checked the positions of several bright-headed pins in the map. "That's in the middle of the island of Zanzibar. How do you think the government would like us spending their money on a worthless jaunt to Zanzibar?"

"Don't care, really," the Lord murmured, in the tone of a child who has been unnecessarily chastised.

"Oh, come on," Ernie jollied him. "Let's get to it now and have the weekend free for going up to Nantucket. You said you wanted to do some fishing."

The Lord's face brightened instantly, and he threw off his Harris tweed jacket. "Yes, yes, indeed, indeed!" the Lord chuckled, rolling his sleeves and taking a few capering steps toward the banks of dilating dials on the wall. "Indeed, indeed!"

He began to toy with the machinery in his usual way.

Ernie Higgenson thumbed his glasses up on his nose, and found himself asking worriedly, "You know, Lord Upton, you haven't even told me precisely what you expect the NeuroThrob to do, once it's completed. I haven't been able to figure out what its ultimate use will be. I know how it should work, tapping the energy and all, but what will it *do*?"

"No idea," the Lord admitted, accelerating his work.

Ernie Higgenson began to turn away, relieved, "Oh, well that's a different mat—" He spun back and his face was dead mushroom white. "You, wha?" he blubbled. "You don't *know!*"

He rushed forward, and tackled the Lord, who was busily thrusting a spanner into the mazes of wires and coils.

"We've got enough radioactive materials in this thing to part the lower end of Manhattan from the rest of the island! You must have really gone it *this* time! You can't invent a machine with all that hot stuff in it, and not know what it's for!"

"You're an ass like all the rest. Go away."

Ernie threw his hands in the air, and stalked into his bedroom. He slammed the door, turned on the hi-fi and sank down in an armchair, closing his eyes to the softly welling strains of Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead.* His nerves lost their tension, and he breathed deeply in forced relaxation.

Everything was going to be all right.

Of course, there was still the problem of the NeuroThrob—and what did that name signify? Lord Upton must have had *something* in mind when he began it. They had already put two months and twelve million dollars in it; why, one of the bearings alone had cost over ten thousand, fashioned from a gold-aluminum-steel combination, fused and alloyed so that it would melt at precisely two hundred and eighteen degrees fahrenheit.

He decided not to think about it. This was his secret maneuver for any situation involving the Lord that he could not handle at the moment. He would blank it out in relaxation, and worry about it when his thoughts had settled.

He was beginning to swim in the second movement of the *Isle* when he heard the catastrophic, belching WHUMPITY! of the machine outside.

There was no doubt it was the NeuroThrob. What else could make a noise like that? He launched himself from the chair and hit the door with such a smash that he was thrown back, his nose a mass of pain, his glasses hanging from one ear, his directions completely tangled. "Got to remember to *open* it, *open* it . . ." he gibbered staggering blindly around the bedroom,

clutching his nose. Finally, his head lost a portion of its throb, and he found his way to the door once more.

Approaching it as though it had a life of its own, he turned the knob gingerly, and opened the door.

The living room had gone as mad as Lord Upton.

The ball suspended from the ceiling was whirling, alternately catching beams of light thrown out by the machines around the room, in its thousand facets. The big board was clacking wildly, and from its audio grille near the top, was belching the horrible *whumpity* Ernie had heard before.

All the lights in the apartment had gone out, save those on the control panels. The room was dim and filled with the sharp tang of ozone. Lord Upton was standing behind the portable control box, flipping verniers with a twist of his hand, and noting down reactions with a ball point pen on his shirt cuff.

"Lord Upton!" Ernie bellowed. "What the hell are you doing?"

"Decided not to wire it in completely," he said, his face washed by the reflected light from the twirling ball in the ceiling. "Wanted to try it this way first. Finish it later."

At that precise moment, the air in the center of the room began to swirl, and in the beams of light from the machines—caught by the revolving ball and thrown back around the room—dust motes glistened golden and huge. The air swirled, and what appeared to be a miniature whirlpool of nothingness spiderwebbed into existence and spun outward. Then a little more air was drawn to the whirlpool, then a little more, and in a few moments the center of the living room was seething with invisible activity.

"What's happening?" Ernie screamed, over the whine of the machines, the whumpity of the panel, and the swirl of air and matter being drawn to the pool.

"Confound it, Higgenson, how the blawst should *I* know? I merely invented the thing!"

The swirling and whirlpooling continued, and Ernie shrank back against the wall in abject fear.

Abruptly, a form began to take shape in the whirling.

It formed, and it formed, and it solidified, and more matter was drawn from somewhere to there, and the form formed, till it was obvious—

A woman was forming in the center of Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton's living room.

Ernie Higgenson watched with a strange grimace pulling his face out of shape. "Migawd!" he blurted, "You have invented a matter transmitter! You've snagged in a woman!"

"Impossible," the Lord roared, over the screeches of the tortured air and the whumpity of the machine, "this machine couldn't possibly move one human being from place to place. What I think it does is—"

The girl solidified completely, and as abruptly as the last folicle of hair appeared on her head, the whining of the machines died down. The Lord cut off one knife-switch, and twisted a half dozen verniers to normal. He cut the juice to the machine.

The girl stood there, arms at sides, her light brown hair glowing with the same iridescent grandeur the dust motes had held. She was totally naked.

Ernie Higgenson stared at her, and without any appreciable time lapse, lived an eternity in the heart of her deep brown eyes. He saw there a cleanliness and a satisfaction he had never known in any woman. He was a bachelor because he had been too critical of the many small faltering failures all women were heir to. But this creature, this product of the air and the dust, was something else. In a split second, just the time it took her to regard him levelly and curiously, almost with childlike trust, Ernie Higgenson fell madly and violently in love.

The Lord was puttering with a lead. "Hmmm, no wonder!"

He held up the fused end of one cord, where an input solid should have been hanging. It was gone, and fused cord and plastic hung dead. "We shorted through one whole sequence, and came up with a new principle. Wonderful! I *knew* this machine could do *some*thing."

Ernie could still not believe the Lord had invented the NeuroThrob without any idea as to what it would do. That was crazy!

But then, so was the Lord.

The Lord was down on hands and knees, having opened a little cubicle under the control panel, and he was fingering printed circuits and rows of transistors with delicate efficiency. "Ah! This is it, Higgenson, this is it. The

machine has an atomic gathering sequence down here."

"A what?"

"Gathering sequence on an atomic level. You see, there is a basic *gathering* principle to everything. On primary levels, humans gather electrical energy and knowledge and static power, and trucks gather miles and wear, and radios gather in sound waves and electrical energy. This machine gathers in atoms themselves. They are pulled to it, and then co-join. What we have here is a miniature human being factory. Because it's apparent this machine has been adjusted to gather in humans, female, young, attractive. We have ourselves a woman factory here."

How the Lord had ascertained all that from his cursory examination, was something beyond Ernie's power to understand. But he had seen Lord Upton come away with too many new concepts unheard of before, to question what he was saying. He might not know how a machine worked, or what he had done to make it act so, but he certainly knews its capabilities.

And if he said this was a woman factory, the Neuro-Throb, then he knew what he was saying.

But Ernie boggled at the idea, anyhow.

For they had created life. Not just paramecium or unicellular abortions, but a full-blown (wow! How full-blown!) and completely equipped (wow! How equipped!) woman. He stared at her, and through the love that coated him like clear lacquer, he found amazement in his bloodstream.

"What's your name?" he asked her.

She ignored him, looking at herself pink and healthy, and at the room around her. There was a wild-eyed innocence about her, and hardly realizing he was doing it, Ernie removed his jacket and slipped it around her bare shoulders.

It did not reach her knees, but it served the purpose.

He continued to stare at her openly, while she—with a growing wonder in her liquid brown eyes—studied the ball in the ceiling, the banks of dials, and the other queer equipment situated around the room. He asked her name again, but she still did not answer, and they stood there a few feet apart, watching different things, yet something joined them silently as though they were brother and sister.

The Lord got up from his knees, and said with finality, "Well. We must be getting on with the experiments, wouldn't you say?"

Ernie stared at him as though he had just sprouted feathers. "Lord Upton, you can't perform any more experiments with the Neuro-Throb!"

"Why not?" The Lord was amazed at Higgenson's attitude.

"It's, it's not *right,* that's all. It's against the laws of nature. And besides, where are you getting the matter from, to create these women? You know matter can neither be created nor destroyed. So what's happening to the structure of the universe, every time you'd be making one of these women?" Higgenson's words were delivered coolly and with reason.

They did not reach Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton.

"You're letting emotion rule you, Higgenson," Lord Upton reprimanded him. "You know how I loathe that in you; it should be painfully obvious: I am neither creating nor destroying, as you put it. I am converting. What were swimming around in the general flux and flow of matter arrangement, have been drawn into my whirlpool here, and converted into a human being. That defies no laws of physics. Not that I *know* it doesn't defy them, but I should think I'm right. I usually am."

He flicked at his white, thick mustache.

"Higgenson, shall we proceed?"

Ernie waved his arms spastically. "You can't just go around making people out of air like that! It's not natural . . . it'll, it'll, think what it'll do to the housing situation, the immigration laws, the—the *census*!"

"Pfoof! Balderdash," the Lord snorted ruefully. "Turn her out of here now, so we can get back to work. I want to try a new set-up hooking the sphere in with a three-phase sonic impulse, translating it into microwaves that I'll be able to—"

"Lord Upton," Higgenson said with placid regularity, "this time you have gone too far. I hereby resign."

He spun on his heel, took the girl with the light brown hair by the shoulders, and marched her out of the apartment, and into the self-service elevator. "You wait here," he told her, leaving her in the vestibule, her fine legs showing with just a tinge of tan,

beneath his jacket. "I'll get the car."

He went out the back way, down into the garage beneath the building, and got out his own Chrysler. He eyed the Mercedes-Benz and Cadillac belonging to the Lord, and snapped his fingers in disdain at them.

He drove the Chrysler up the ramp, and out onto the street. As he came around the block, pulling in to the curb, before Lord Upton's building, he saw a huge crowd had gathered.

He leaped out, thinking the girl with the light brown hair might have been arrested for indecent exposure or some other charge. The crowd broke before his rush, and as he struggled into the center of the cleared space, he saw his jacket lying on the tiles just inside the door, and a very bewildered doorman who was being held erect by three men, saying, "But I tell ya, she was standin' right *here* one minute, and the next, she went poof! like that, y'know, and she's *gone*! Right inta the air!"

There were golden dust motes lazily floating to the sidewalk, as Ernie Higgenson sucked misery from deep inside himself.

His true love had gone poof!

When he came back upstairs, two five hundred pound cast iron balls dragging at each foot, Lord Upton was standing on his head in a corner, reading *Within A Budding Grove,* the second part of Proust's epic *Remembrance Of Things Past.* He was practicing yoga, as was his wont in late afternoons. Even as Ernie slammed the door, the Lord flopped down, and sat into a new pretzled position.

"What took you so duecedly long?" Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton said, glancing up from Proust. "I'd like to get back to work."

Ernie flung himself onto the couch. "She went poof!"

"Oh?"

"Yeah. Like that, poof!"

"Fantastic!"

"Poof."

"Amazing . . . truly!"

"Poof." Ernie was growing vocally weaker.

Lord Upton closed the volume with a clap. "*Who* went poof, Higgenson? Don't be so obtuse. *Who* poofed? Poofled? Peefed?" He tinkered with the word, trying to find the past perfect of poof, finally giving up with an embarrassed smirk and a cracking of joints as he rose.

"The girl, the girl," Hig-

genson bleated, from the lower depths of misery. "She was waiting for me to get the car; I was going to take her to a girls' residence club I know, over on West 92nd. But when I got around to the lobby, she'd—gone poof!"

The Lord listened to this with studied interest. "You mean, I *say*, you mean she had disintegrated into her components and returned to the cosmos?"

"Suppose so," Ernie said glumly, shrugging.

"Hmmm," Lord Upton pondered. "If I had known that, I wouldn't have re-wired the NeuroThrob. We might have sent its impulses through the same pattern, and brought back the exact atoms that were her, but now it's too late. I'm afraid she's gone, Higgenson. Shall we get back to work?"

"Uh." Ernie grunted laconically. Lord Upton scrutinized him carefully. As quickly as it had come, the Lord's moments of madness had passed, and he was serious, concerned over his assistant's distressed attitude.

"Do I detect an unnatural attachment for that pile of atoms, Higgenson? Duecedly unscientific, you know. Can't have that sort of thing around here."

"Go—" Ernie swore at him. His glasses slid down his nose.

"Tut, Higgenson," Lord Upton placated him, "tut, man. Let's not let our brain centers get clogged by sticky sentimen—" Ernie chased him under the desk then went back and flopped onto the sofa again.

From beneath the furniture, Lord Upton piped, "I say there, Higgenson old man. Why not be reasonable about this? I'm sure I can bring out another wench equally as—er—full-blown as this other one. Perhaps with even larger—"

CRASH!

"Higgenson, the cost of that terra-cotta lamp will be levied against your next month's wages. Priceless, you know! Absolutely, absolutely priceless."

Ernie slid further down into the sofa, further down into dejection. Stealthily, Lord Upton crawled from beneath the desk, on all fours.

He was about to suggest psychoanalysis, when the front door buzzer rasped. Ernie started abruptly. Lord Upton brushed himself off and indicated the door with a wave of his hand. "Answer it."

Ernie looked up, "Answer it yourself."

"You *work* for me!"

"Not any more . . . I quit."

"You can't quit. It isn't in your contract."

"I haven't got a contract."

"Well, you should have one. Oversight is all." The buzzer again, this time more insistently.

"Will you answer that door, Higgenson?"

"Frankly, no."

"Clod!" the Lord blared, and strode toward the door. He pulled it open and standing there framed by the hall lights was a small man and a big man. They looked at Lord Upton calmly, and the small man drew a .45 from his trenchcoat pocket. He placed it against the Lord's hipbone and said, "Good afternoon."

Lord Upton stared at the big black weapon, and the little man who held it with such seeming ease, though it was far too large for the hand. He looked far up overhead at the big man, who more resembled a huge, hairless ape than a human being.

"Salesmen to the rear entrance," Lord Upton began, trying to finish in the same sentence by shutting the door. The big man put one hand flat to the closing door, ignoring his little companion and the gun, and pushed gently.

The door slammed inward, hitting the wall, knocking Lord Upton out of the way rudely. "We ain't selling, we're buying," the little man said. "Close'a door Hairless."

Hairless closed the door, and slumped against it, his huge body ungainly in the pin-stripe suit that had been designed for a man, not a behemoth. He was totally bald, without a trace of hair anywhere on his body. Even his eyebrows were absent, giving a stark, polished look to the ridges over his eyes. The eyes were tiny, blue and very animal-seeming. His nose was a chunk of white marble, imperfectly set toward the right, and his mouth was loose, with lips that closed froglike and smooth. His jaw was prognathous. More ape than man. His arms hung quite low, and his wrists protruded from the sleeves of the pin-stripe jacket. His shoes looked too tight.

The little man came in, shoving his wide-brim hat back on his head. He had hair that was pitch-black and greased back flat in a widow's peak from his high white forehead. His nose might have been used to open beer cans. He was a hungry little fellow, with nervous absent movements of his hands and feet.

He wore the same style pinstripe, with shoulder pads that extended six inches beyond his body on either side. He tapered down in such a way that he might have been a wedge with legs. His shoes were very shiny.

"My name is Monkey," he said.

It doesn't figure, Ernie thought ruefully. *Your name should be Rodent, and the big one should be Ape.*

The little man's sharp, shining eyes roamed the room, taking in all the machinery. He nodded with satisfaction and said over his shoulder to Hairless, "Right place, man. We hit the jackpot this time."

The ape grunted.

Monkey, using the automatic as a prod, hip-pushed Lord Upton to the sofa. "I seen ya pitchers inna paper; you're the head man in this bunch. You this Lord whazzisname?"

"Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton here," Lord Upton drew himself erect like a poppinjay. "What is it, precisely what is it you wish, you filthy little blighter."

Monkey darkened at that, and his skin, already olive and shiny, became the face of a storm. "Don'tchoo never call me stuff like that again, you stinkin' limey, or I'll put the topa ya head against the ceiling." He brandished the .45.

Ernie decided it was time to intervene. "Now look here you—"

Monkey turned partially, murmured, "Hairless . . ."

Hairless took three fast steps toward the couch, lifted Ernie by his shirt front, held him up in the air with feet kicking for an instant, and quietly popped his huge fist into Ernie's face. Ernie sagged.

Hairless dumped him back on the couch without comment. And then resumed his place at the door.

"Now," said Monkey. "We got a little business to take care of, while your friend there is snoozin'. Siddown." He indicated the sofa Ernie was occupying; he indicated it with a wave of the big, ugly .45 automatic.

Lord Upton sat down, cross-legged, beside Ernie, inclining his head to tsk-tsk at his aide's unconscious condition. "Quite a blow there, old man," he said to Hairless. Hairless stared back numbly, dumbly, vacantly.

"Awright, awright, knock it off," Monkey admonished him. "I been hearin' from friends around, an' people in Washington, you got a buncha machines could help me out a

little. I wanna buy some from ya."

"I sell my inventions only to accredited outlets," Lord Upton began. "General Electric, Westinghouse, Boeing—"

"Don't hand me none'a ya gook," Monkey cut in, slashing the barrel of the .45 through the air. "I wanna buy a coupla real sharp jobs that'll make my line'a work easier, and you got two choices how I pay off." He dipped a hand into his pocket, came up with a huge roll of bills, held together by a blue rubber band. "This," he said, holding the money forward, "or this," and he showed Lord Upton the gun.

Lord Upton's mustache bristled. He had been at Belleau Wood and at Dunkirk, and no whippersnapper of an American could threaten *him* like this. He noticed Hairless hanging loosely, waiting, by the door.

Lord Upton settled back.

He detested violence, particularly when inflicted upon himself.

"What is your line of work?" Lord Upton asked, conversationally.

"I'm a heel," Monkey admitted, sitting down on the arm of a chair. He twirled the automatic with pride in his trade. "I cheat people. A crook, y'know. A real good one. Known and respected in my chosen line'a endeavor."

Lord Upton fingered his cravat nervously. "Uh, yes."

"Now, f'rinstance," Monkey said, looking around. "What's all this jazz?"

"A NeuroThrob," Lord Upton answered carefully.

"Whuzzat?"

"A NeuroThrob."

"What's it do? Why ya call it that?"

"I just called it that because I thought it was an appropriate bit of nomenclature," Lord Upton said, then corrected himeslf, "er, I thought the name fitted it."

"What's it do?"

"It makes women."

"Hey!" Monkey's gleaming eyes lit up. "That's a great bit'a stuff, man."

"Uh, no no, you don't quite understand, I'm sure," Lord Upton hastened to amend his speech. "It *creates* women. Out of thin air."

Monkey considered this for a minute, and a light began to dawn in his eyes. "Yeah, yeah," he said slowly.

"It might work. It might be just what I need."

Lord Upton stared at him. "Oh no, you don't under—"

"I unnerstan' perfectly, Jack. This is a gold mine. I

turn this machine into a wife factory, see. I tell these rich old goats what can't get a broad, that I'll give 'em a doozie of a wife, for a mere ten Gs. And I can use these babes for getting articles for *Slander* magazine — I been doin' a little colooshun stuff on Hollywood stars, see; I set up a date between a broad and this moovie star, see, and then take pix of it. Now I can see how this machine'll cut down my overhead real nice; I won't have to pay the broads no more."

He started toward the movable control panel, intending a closer examination, but Lord Upton stopped him with, "You still don't understand. From what we have been able to tell, these women don't last too long . . ."

"So what broad *does*?"

"No, no, what I mean, my good man, is that they evaporate, disintegrate, go poof! They return to their component atomic parts soon after formation."

"All the better," Monkey rubbed his hands together, clinking his pinky ring on the butt-grip of the .45, "that way they can't trace the broads to me . . . and nobody's around to blow the whistle. If I sell 'em as wives, an' they poof like you say they do, then the old goat I sold 'em to, he'll be afraid to open his yap, 'cause someone'll think he killed her, or something. And anyway, they'd be scared of the sack I could toss on them with *Scandal* magazine if they said anything. Yeah, it's a natural.

"I was hopin' to find some small t'ing here that would help me out in my work, but this is the greatest! Absolutely the greatest!"

He walked toward the machine.

Lord Upton rose to stop him. "No, you can't—"

Monkey turned, leveling the pistol. His finger tightened on the trigger. He waggled the gun at Lord Upton, and Lord Upton sat down again heavily. He bumped into Ernie, and Higgenson came awake suddenly, as though he had been sleeping and the jolt had wakened him. He came up swinging.

Hairless bumped off from the door, his arms ready to lift Ernie and hurl him at the wall. Ernie went under his reach, and hit Monkey in the stomach with his head.

Monkey doubled up, his legs straight out as he left the floor. The gun sailed across the room, struck a large tip-pointed tube which exploded with a pop at the contact, and

fell down behind a small control board.

Monkey went back against the wall as Ernie barreled forward. His head hit the wall with a resounding thwack as the air went out of him whoofingly. He slid down the wall quietly, his wide pancake-brim hat crushed down over his ears, a warped smile crinkling his lips. He lay there grinning inanely.

Hairless let out a bloated, muted gurgle and charged. Ernie was still dazed, half punchy, and instead of stepping out of the way, he stepped into Hairless' charge. The big frog-lipped idiot caught him hard across the chest with a stoney shoulder, and carried him forward.

Ernie slid down Hairless' chest, and as the big man smashed full into the wall-hall-wall-bang-wall! Ernie was only hurled back. The big man caught the wall full in the face, and ricocheted with a crash. Back and forth like a cueball, clackety-clack, till he finally came to rest in the angle of two walls. The noise had been deafening. Ernie staggered about like a blind duck, clutching his head, and moaning softly.

Lord Uton watched the proceedings with unveiled interest. "Charming," he clapped his hands in childish glee, "charming! A prime example of vector action. Sterling show, simply ripping!"

Ernie's head began to clear. He saw things fade in, and out, and i-i-i-in and ow-ow-ow-owt . . .

"Stop vacillating," he commanded the fifteen hundred Lord Upton's shivering and shimmering on the sofa. "S-stop it right now, dammit!"

Lord Upton arose, came to his aide, and helped him to the sofa, with an arm around Higgenson's shoulders. "You were brilliant, Higgenson, just brililant. You may forget the cost of that terra-cotta lamp." Ernie sat down with a jolt that hurt clear from neck to skull-top.

"Who the hell are they?" he asked, through a lessening fog. "What'd they want with you?"

"You were unconscious, my boy, when they explained all that. They seem to be low-lifes of some sort, and smut peddlers for some yellow sheet called *Scandal* magazine."

"*Scandal?* Don't tell me these two weirdies are hooked in with Harrison Burge and his slop-sheet? That's bad stuff, Lord Upton. Did you see what they did to Professor

Quellen in their August issue? Practically had old John Quellen indicted for Communist activity, ready to overthrow practically everything. The worst, that rag!"

Lord Upton fingered his V-shaped jaw. "No, can't say I've ever perused their periodical, Higgenson. Bad you say?"

"The lowest form of journalism ever garbaged up. Their hands could never be clean again. Harrison Burge has even been known to set up these stories, and lure celebrities into them."

Lord Upton nodded. "Um. Yes, that is what this one said," he looked toward the supine Monkey. "Can't something be done about these blighters?"

Ernie ran a hand through his blonde hair. "Not really. You see, the stuff they print is true. No getting away from that. One way or another, speciously put or hedging the facts, basically they print truth.

"The dark gray side of truth. The sort of truth that in common men would go unnoticed, but that in celebrities is rich, red meat for those jackals."

"How come you know so much about them?"

"One of their staff writers, an ex-college friend named Kierney Halliday spills it all to me when he gets tanked. Which is about twice a week —he writes for them and takes their money, I'm afraid Kierney's conscience gets sublimated when he has a few dozen too many, but he doesn't like his work. He's told me things that would curl your hair.

"Something should be done to put a stop to their work."

Lord Upton looked down at his aide, and said, "Well, my boy, why *don't* we put a stop to *Scandal* magazine, and this Harrison Burge, also, while we are at it."

Ernie Higgenson looked up at his boss, and said, "You aren't really serious about this; Burge isn't any patsy. He has influential friends in government and city politics. He could get our work cut off before you could say triode."

"Pfood and pfoof!" Lord Upton waved away the objection, "We have the Neuro-Throb, and with it we can carry out a plan equivalent to that of Monkey's."

"I don't understand."

"You will, my boy, you will.

"And so will Monkey and Hairless."

From the storage room on the roof, Lord Upton had had

Ernie bring down several old inventions. The Bind was brought down, along with the hydroponics-shell. They put Monkey and Hairless inside the range of the Bind's entrapping field, and left them in the bedroom with the hydroponics-shell around them, to sustain them indefinitely, while Lord Upton and Ernie carried out their plan.

Lord Upton sent Ernie out to used magazine shops along Eighth Avenue and Sixth Avenue, to find back issues of *Scandal.* "We must indeed learn the *modus operandi* of their collusions," Lord Upton had said, laying a finger along his mustache. "Fight fire with—"

"Yeah, I know," Ernie had interrupted, starting for the door. "But this business is a pain in the crankcase. I thought you were going to try and get that girl back."

"For you."

"Hell, yes for me. For who did you think? Tommy Manville?"

"Now let's not be impertinent, Higgenson. Just do as I say, and everything will work out."

Ernie snorted, and clapped his hat on his blonde head. At the door he turned and said in a self-conscious but surly tone, "Well, you'd better do something, Lord Upton. Because I'm getting heartsick."

He seemed so confused at what he had said, that he slammed the door quickly, and beat a fast retreat.

While Ernie was gone, Lord Upton re-wired the machine. Humming to himself, from time to time he took off a moment for one of the several hundred huge dill pickles kept frozen at all times in the freezer chest of the icebox. At one such break he looked in on Monkey and Hairless.

"Splendid, you're doing simply splendidly!" and he poked his head back out, for they were beginning to turn purple with subdued rage.

By the time Ernie had returned, Lord Upton had completed the re-wiring and had tried out his new sequences. The living room was crowded with beautiful women. But there were differences now. They were all clothed, and they all looked the same—almost.

"I re-adjusted a few things," Lord Upton steepled his fingers meditatively, looking at the throng in the living room. Even as he said it, one of the girls went poof! and dusted away to nothing.

"That was number seven,"

he said. "Number eight ought to be poofing any second now. Number eight, a leggy brownette wearing only panties and bra, dusted off a few seconds later. "Overdue," Lord Upton mused. "They're gaining longer stability. Fine, fine."

Ernie noticed that each girl was only slightly different from the rest. One had more brilliant hair, another's eyes were more oriental in slant, a third had a slighter uptilt to her nose.

"I'm working on two things," said Lord Upton. "I'm first trying to obtain a perfect sex-wench. One who is the apex of attraction. I feel that working from a basic form, and then improving it slightly with each one that comes through, I'll finally get a woman no man can resist.

"Least of all this Harrison Burge fellow. What say?"

"I say fine, fine, fine," Ernie muttered, tossing the *Scandal* magazines on the coffee table, and falling back into his old place on the sofa. "But who gives a damn. I want my girl back." He had already decided she was *his* girl.

"In time, Higgenson, in time. Never fear."

Ernie nodded lackadaisically. "And what's the other thing you're working on?"

"Longevity of attraction for the molecules. I'm trying to manage one of these that will remain stable for several days, if necessary."

"Just fine," Ernie whipped off sarcastically. "You make a perfect sex-symbol that'll hang around for a couple days, so you can bust—"

"Burst, Higgenson, *burst*. Let's not allow our grammar to deteriorate."

"Burst hell! In this case it's *bust!* Anyhow, you want to spoil the show for Harrison Burge, just because he sent a couple of his toadies over to get a machine from you."

Lord Upton corrected him, "I'm quite sure Mr. Burge has no knowledge of these men's appearance here."

"Then why?"

"I dislike legal smut."

"That simple."

"That simple," Lord Upton agreed, making a washing movement with his hands.

"So what about my dream girl?" Ernie begged him.

"Scattered to the winds, literally," Lord Upton concluded. "But perhaps we can reassemble her. We'll try after I've settled Mr. Harrison Burge's giblets."

"Okay, what do you want me to do . . . *yowch!*" At that moment one of the girls went poof! and vanished.

"*Must* they keep doing that? It's making me nervous," Ernie exclaimed.

"Eminent, eminent," Lord Upton chortled. "It took her over thirty-five minutes to go. They're getting better all the time. And she was the one with the improved thighs; just fine. They're getting better all the time."

Ernie went into the bathroom and took a headache powder. When he came back, Lord Upton was just snapping down the lid on the portable control box. "All right, now, Higgenson," the Lord directed him, "I want you to stay here and bring these girls through as I work the progression board in my bedroom. I set it up in there so we would have more room. As I change the calibrations, the girls' appearance will change. You let me know when we've got what we want."

He hurried away, and in a few moments Ernie heard the whine of the generator in the Lord's bedroom starting up. "Ready in there?" he asked, thinking of the girl with the brown hair and the bright eyes.

"Jolly well set," Lord Upton caroled.

Ernie flipped on the Neuro-Throb. The ball in the ceiling began to revolve, picking up the beams of light from the banks of machines around the walls; the noise increased, and a whirlpool began to form. Then, like a summer dust devil, the whirlpool spun away. It spun into the wall, and disappeared. Shortly, the walls began to glow an even brighter aqua. And then the first girl stepped out of the wall.

She was a honey blonde, and she had only one blue eye. "Jees, Lord Upton!" Ernie screamed. "This one has only one eye!"

The one-eyed girl perambulated around the room and settled on the couch beside two almost-identical brunettes who were staring vacantly at the wall. No one had said a word yet, in that entire multitude of women. The one-eyed girl yawned, and as her lips closed, two girls across the room, sitting cross-legged before the door to the kitchen, went poof! simultaneously. That left only about twenty-five or thirty women in the room.

"Oversight, my boy, mere oversight," Lord Upton said from the bedroom. "Are they coming through properly now?"

A stream of girls began coming through the wall. Red-

heads, blondes, brunettes, long-legged, fat, windblown, cross - eyed, olive - skinned, large-eared. Ernie called out their characteristics as they came through. He continued to try and adjust the whirlpool so they would not have to walk through the wall, but it did no good. The phase was stuck.

"Damn!" Lord Upton bleated. The whine died away in the bedroom, and Lord Upton chugged back into the living room.

A girl had been caught when the machine stopped. She was wedged half in, half out of the wall. Her face was a portrait of shock and disdain.

"Well, what happened?" Ernie demanded. Lord Upton looked sheepish.

"Blew a fuse," he explained.

"Well, do something, for God's sake . . . she's wedged in the wall."

"I'm hardly blind, Higgenson. I can see she's wedged in the wall. Hello there, my dear." The girl stared at him numbly. Ernie had yet to hear one of them speak. They seemed to be speechless.

Lord Upton shrugged and waddled back to the bedroom. Ernie heard the sounds of face plates being unsnapped, and then the clatter of parts striking the floor. An "Ah!" and an "Uhhh!" came from the bedroom, and Lord Upton called out, "All fixed, Higgenson. Snap on your unit."

Then they started in again. The girl who was wedged in the wall was set free, and shortly thereafter the girls who came through were speaking. There were no more one-eyed freaks, and finally, Ernie called out:

"Okay, Lord Upton. Kill the power. This is the one. WOW!"

The girl they had brought forth was a beauty. She had long legs, encased in sheer nylons. Her body was slim and high-breasted, and her hair was a silver-gray that had a faint bluish tone lost down in the strands somewhere. Her face was a perfect study in sensuality, her lips moist and crimson, her eyes the deepest blue Ernie had ever seen. She spoke in a voice musky and deep as a pool of honey. She was the most attractive woman in the world. Bar none. She *had* to be, she just looked like it. The others in the room—and there were now perhaps fifty of them, spilling over into the kitchen, the bathroom and bedroom—stopped gabbling and stared

at her. She wore only a short ballerina skirt with a bodice that hugged her ample figure tightly.

Ernie felt his throat clog up. Though she was the most gorgeous creature ever imagined, still somehow he could not lose himself in desire for her. He knew he should be completely head-over-heels in love with her, but the less beautiful image of the first girl they had made continued to haunt him.

"When do I get *my* girl?" Ernie asked Lord Upton, who had not yet come in from the bedroom.

"Aren't I . . . *enough* for you?" the silver-haired beauty asked him, her eyes lowering, her skin glowing with love and desire.

Ernie trembled, and the bones of his legs felt like putty ready to run. "N-nothing l'like th-th-that," he stammered, falling into silence, and moving away from her. He could feel the warmth of her body halfway across the room.

If they had wanted a woman to ruin Harrison Burge, this was the woman.

This woman could ruin anyone, from Alexander the Great to the last living member of the Confederate Army of America. She was but the most. Ernie thought of her in just that way.

"You'll see your girl soon enough, Higgenson," Lord Upton called from the next room.

Ernie was about to croak for his boss to come to his aid, when Lord Upton emerged from the room, rolling down his sleeves, and wiping perspiration from his forehead at the same time.

A neat trick.

Lord Upton took four steps into the room, saw the silver-haired girl, and let forth a howl that reminded Ernie of *Bring 'Em Back Alive* with Frank Buck. Lord Upton began pawing the carpet, and then leaped forward. The girl in the ballerina skirt and bodice stepped back in terror as Lord Upton jumped her, and tripped. She sat down with a thump and Lord Upton went right over her, crashing into a bunch of girls —three of whom went poof! almost out of spite. Lord Upton disappeared amidst a flailing of arms and legs, finally emerging to gasp, "Magnificent!"

After Ernie had managed to calm Lord Upton's desire for Silver, as they decided to call her, he called Kierney Halliday at the writer's apart-

ment. Lord Upton listened as Ernie talked. It was one-sided, but expressive:

"Kierney, buddy."

Pause.

"Oh, nothing. Still pretty whacky over here. You still pecking them out for Harrison Burge?"

Pause.

"Yeah, I know what you mean. But you're still on his good list, right?"

Pause.

"Don't sound so hesitant. I'm going to give you a chance to cream your chief source of income . . . and save your soul at the same time, Faustus."

Pause.

"Take it easy, don't jump. I'll *tell* you what I want."

Pause.

"That's the way Lord Upton feels about it—"

Pause.

"Look, Harrison Burge has been asking for it for a long time. You remember what he did to Professor Quellen. Right. Right. Yeah, yeah, I know you didn't write that one. But just the same, even though it'll cost you in the pocketbook, Lord Upton's got a deal cooking whereby Harrison Burge'll be sent back to publishing those girlie books he used to do. How does that sound . . . if it doesn't hang your hide too much?"

Pause.

"Fine. You sound about as eager as a Christian on his way to the lions."

Pause.

"All right, sorry. Now here's what I want you to do: Get in touch with Burge. Let him know you've got a whole Dixie cup full of hot leads. Tell him a very famous scientist wants to rat on his comrades; he has all sorts of dirt that *Scandal* can use. Don't give any names. Then set up a meet for us at, uh, wait a minute . . ." he turned to Lord Upton. "Where do you want to see Burge?"

Lord Upton fingered his mustache. "Make it the restaurant on Times Square there . . . you know . . . the large one—"

"Toffenetti's?" Lord Upton nodded and Ernie turned back to the phone. "Kierney? Make it Toffenetti's at, let's say, eight o'clock. Make sure he comes alone. If he thinks you'll be there, he probably won't need any of his sideboys. Okay?"

Pause.

"Don't ask questions. But one thing, just keep your hands under your rump when you see who we bring with us."

Pause.

"Better than Gina."

Pause.

"Better than Marilyn. And stop asking me. Just watch yourself, and I don't mean because she's attractive. Man, you have no idea. Just lock your fingers and you'll be safe. Remember, it's Burge we want to sink—not you."

Pause.

"Okay then. See you at eight. Right?"

Pause.

"Take easy. Pip-ho." He hung up. "All set. Firmed up."

Lord Upton sat staring at Silver, who was busily engaged in buffing her long nails, sitting with legs crossed beside the largest bank of dials in the apartment. "I said we're all set," Ernie reiterated. Lord Upton's eyes were growing glassy, he was licking his lips.

As he started to move toward her, she screamed and jumped onto the chair, her beautiful face contorted in fear at the raging beast before her. Ernie dove, brought the Lord to the floor with a tackle and a crash, and looked at him soberly as they lay there.

"I know how it is, Lord Upton. I don't blame you. It's rough. But if we start sampling the merchandise, Burge will never get to meet her.

"We're all set. Let's start reading those *Scandals,* so we can see what approach they use on collusion cases."

Lord Upton nodded sadly, allowed his aide to aid him to his feet, and carefully avoiding looking at Silver—who was again buffing her nails—they set to work reading *Scandal.*

Kierney Halliday had been primed by phone in several later conversations, both with Ernie and Lord Upton on the particulars. As a result, the lower dining room of Toffenetti's was packed with newspapermen—trying to remain innocuous, if possible—with their photographers behind every potted palm and swinging door in the restaurant. Ernie and Lord Upton arrived early, by six-thirty, and Ernie had several stingers in preparation for the ordeal.

Silver was a smash success from the moment she left the apartment. Lord Upton had called *Maison Chic* for a dress and underthings, shoes and hat for Silver, and when Cecile Laurent duBois of *Maison Chic* had seen her, she had—as Ernie phrased it later in awe, in the taxi—"but flipped her snapper!"

She had gone chirruping and capering about the apart-

ment, begging Lord Upton to allow her the use of Silver's face for, "Joost one eensy-weensy picshurrr, eh mon cher?" But Lord Upton had refused coldly (Silver had begun her pedicure by that time) and enjoined the Mademoiselle to fit Silver out. Rather than bearing malice for the refusal, Cecile had outdone herself.

She had somehow tailored a stunning backless silver-mesh cloth dress that hugged Silver's voluptuous figure, till it was a second skin, and had provided sheer, black lace underthings to complete the ensemble. A black flower from some exclusive florist cross-town had been pinned in Silver's hair, and the combination was, to say the least, remarkable. When they went downstairs to get in the taxi, they had to forcibly restrain the hackie from climbing over the boards into the back seat.

The drive downtown had been one fraught with hazards, for not only had the cabbie continually turned around to drool in Silver's very lap, but passing cars continually cracked into telephone poles, store fronts, pedestrians and each other as their drivers caught fleeting glimpses of the unbelievably sexy and devastatingly gorgeous pseudo-girl.

"What a fortune we could make with her," Ernie mumbled, sitting on his hands beside Silver. "TV, advertising, movies, photographs, migawd!" He had lapsed into silence and stared out the window at the refreshingly, soothingly plain women of New York.

The scene at Toffenetti's door was a bedlam. Newsstand operators on the corners who saw her left their places of business; tourists and jaded Broadway hangers-on flocked to them; cops and newspaper truck drivers, drunks and businesmen, everyone who saw her, forgot who they were with or what they were doing, and streaked toward her.

They made it inside barely in time, and only by threatening the maitre d' with bodily harm should one of the attackers get in, were they able to make it to the lower dining room without mishap.

Of course the waiters, the diners, the owner and the reporters went mad, but that was cleared up in short order. Fifteen minutes. By then, the photographers had only a few shots left unshot. Silver sat between Lord Upton and

Ernie, who studiedly avoided looking at her, while she painted her already moist and delectable lips with a lipstick brush.

Eventually, to the stroke of eight o'clock—which was barely enough time for those already around her to get accustomed to her and to act semi - normal — Harrison Burge arrived with Kierney Halliday.

Halliday was tall and slim and was the soul-portrait of the artist dedicated to starving for his work. He was a literary prostitute, and hated himself. His face was ascetic and gaunt, his eyes deep and black, and he had one hell of a flair for the written word.

Harrison Burge, publisher of *Scandal* was another item entirely.

He was a meatball. Short and squat as a gargoyle, his hands had hair across their backs and down the fingers; his face was loose and jowly and his eyes with their red-pockets were the eyes of a jackal that has suddenly been endowed with human cunning.

He looked the part of a *Scandal* publisher.

Even the big trial out in Hollywood had not softened and changed him; even the eight million he was being sued for had not distressed him. He was enormously wealthy from the unlimited sales of smut, and enormously sold on himself as a powerful force in the American way of life.

Ernie detested him on sight.

When Harrison Burge trundled down the curved staircase into the lower dining room, his little eyes swirled about, taking in everything at once. So cursory was his examination that at first he passed over Silver without seeing her. Then, as though his eyeballs were on strings, and the puppet master had jerked them back in a double-take, he centered on her.

His libido went to hell!

He snorted, pawed the floor like a stud bull and charged. Kierney Halliday caught him halfway across the floor, holding tight to Burge's jacket while the fat little man's feet went ski-dam-dam-dam in a gallop.

It took them twenty-seven minutes to calm the smut-peddler down.

Then he sat down at their table, and Lord Upton went to work on him.

"Mr. Burge, it is not really I who has the information for you on my scientific col-

leagues, but Miss Silver here. She has been—ah—how shall I put it, rather *friendly* with any number of them, and I'm certain if you could speak to her alone for a while, she would be able to—"

Burge frothed and foamed like Old Faithful. "Yeah, yeah, goddam, goddam that's a great goddam idea, Upton! Great goddam idea. I think we can work out a goddam deal here, goddam it. You and me and this god—er, this Miss Silver here. I'd goddam well like to get her alone for a while though." He amended it hastily, "To, uh, talk the goddam thing over that is. I mean, goddam, you know what I goddam well mean, doncha?" Lord Upton nodded. Burge was hooked!

Lord Upton checked his watch, surreptitiously. It was ten minutes to zero hour.

"Well," he urged Harrison Burge, "why not call a taxi and take Miss Silver some place where you two can be alone and—uh—talk. We can discuss financial arrangements later."

"Yeah — yeah," Harrison Burge mouthed, his drooling lips working idly. "I'll talk to ya later Lord Taunton."

A licentious gleam had taken possession of Burge's eyes as he touched Miss Silver, helping her to her feet, and around the table.

They went up the staircase together, and a moment later were gone. Lord Upton called the waiter. "Two vodkatinis, very dry," he said, and settled back.

They were finishing their sixth vodkatini each when the police came in. They clumped down the stairs and confronted Lord Upton.

It took him only five minutes to explain that his niece had been taken away by Harrison Burge for a talk, and that if she had disappeared—even before the watchful eyes of a dozen jealous newspapermen who had immediately fallen in love with Silver and had followed Burge's taxi—he was going to make that scoundrel pay dearly.

He said he would be right downtown to sign the complaint.

He followed the cops, Ernie and the hootie-owl drunk Kierney Halliday in his wake. They were all three capering amid unreserved jollity and drunken fog.

The business at the jail took only half an hour, and the three of them snubbed their noses at Harrison Burge —blank-faced and crushed at losing Silver and his freedom all in the same night—as that

worthy was wheeled away to the pokey pens.

They went out, the three of them, and all got delightfully, haphazardly, pole-kicking, cop - insulting, falling - down and going-wham drunk.

They did not awaken till late the next day, when the stories had hit all the front pages, and Harrison Burge was a ruined man.

"All right, all right," Ernie said, three days later. "All right, so you're going to let Burge off the hook before he goes to trial for murder. So fine. So all's well that ends well, but what about my girl? I'm in love, damn it, and I want that girl!"

Lord Upton set aside the three - foot - long Indonesian back-scratcher he had been carving, and tit-tutted his aide. Taking a cheroot from a container-humidor beside him, Lord Upton said happily, "You are in luck my boy. I have perfected the Neuro-Throb, and I can make a girl that will last indefinitely. Forever, should you be foolhardy enough to wish it so."

"You're kidding?"

"Not a whit my boy. I can make her in the same image as the original girl—in fact it will *be* the same girl—for I have locked the controls at the original settings, with the modifications and improvements I've made since then."

Ernie leaped to his feet. "Well then, what are we waiting for?"

"I, uh, didn't mention—"

"Come on now," Ernie urged him, dragging the Lord to his feet, "no stalling. You said we'd get her back, now let's do it."

"But, Higgenson, I—"

"Don't but Higgenson me, Lord Upton, come on! I want that girl *now*, not indefinitely next Wednesday."

Lord Upton flapped his arms uselessly. "Well, all right, if you insist," he consented, "but—"

"You're damned tootin' I insist," Ernie caroled, leading the maniac scientist to the NeuroThrob control panels.

The machine was started up, the ball in the ceiling revolved, catching the beams of light, the dials clicked, the banks sputtered, the whine rose, the whirlpool formed, and soon . . .

The girl with the brown hair and lustrous eyes stood before Ernie. Ernie smiled, then grinned, then almost burst into tears. She was even more beautiful to him than Silver. And she was all his. He stepped toward her and she smiled.

Behind him—for he was not paying any attention whatsoever to Lord Upton—Ernie heard Yardley-Taunton chuckle, "I'm going out for a while, Higgenson. I want to try shooting the ducks in the Central Park lake. The fat, juicy-looking ones."

"Yeah, sure, go ahead, live . . . enjoy yourself," Ernie tossed over his shoulder, not looking around. Her eyes were so deep and brown they were like rich honey.

Then he heard the door slam.

Lord Upton Yardley-Taunton was gone. Off again.

Who the hell cares? Ernie thought to himself, walking carefully toward the girl of his dreams. *I've got a woman out of the wife factory. I'll make sure that damned machine doesn't start anything like this again.* He had distinct remembrances of the one-eyed girl, the first time this girl before him had poofed! the one who had been stuck in the wall, the unearthly beauty—too much beauty for any one person, really—of Silver. The NeuroThrob was better off broken.

He turned away from the brown-haired girl and went in search of the ten-inch, three-foot length of pipe he knew was around somewhere.

Twenty-four good swings completely ruined the machine, and with Lord Upton's penchant for rushing on to new things, coupled with his eccentric memory, it was a fairly safe bet that Ernie and the world were safe from the wife factory.

He went back to his girl.

I've got a woman from the wife factory, he thought again. *A beautiful, complete woman from air and atoms. From mist and molecules.*

He took her in his arms.

And she was complete. Almost. Lord Upton had been able to make her *almost* complete. He might have done the necessary re-wiring later, but that was immaterial now. But she was *almost* perfect, *almost* complete. In fact, there was just one thing missing.

But Ernie didn't find *that* out till he tried to make love to her.

THE END

CALL HER SATAN

By E. K. JARVIS

An amazing woman, this she-devil. Her body was the most beautiful Duffy had ever seen; the tortures she devised were the most hideous he had ever encountered. But more surprising — he discovered that even a devil can fall in love.

HIS mouth kept filling with blood. Lying as he was across the back of this damned furry creature, bound hand and foot, he could only turn his head and let it drool. How long he had been bleeding he did not know, nor how long this devilish ride had been going on. It was damned uncomfortable, this he knew. Now that full consciousness had returned he tried to reconstruct what had happened. He had landed the space sled properly enough, made sure he had contact with the patrol ship flying in its leisurely orbit around the second planet in this four-planet Universe, then made a hurried but thorough blind over the sled. He remembered also that he had landed rather close to the overhang of the cliff bordering one side of the valley. And that he had taken several steps backward to see whether the sled was visible from a distance of six or eight yards. His foot had slid from under him. Then . . .

Then, he had tumbled backward.

And remembered nothing else . . .

Long ago, in the first year of his Inspectorship, he had learned an odd discipline to take his mind from personal calamity. So Inspector John "Red" Duffy thought back to the beginning.

There had been this "stoolie" they had picked up drunk in a Martian hell-hole. He had babbled about a place "outback" in space, a planet ruled by a beautiful woman, who

Vaya quivered in terror as Duffy fired at the murderous Sentar.

gave refuge to space scum, and among them, one, Milo Sentar, who had killed an Agency man on Venus. Venus was part of Red Duffy's patrol, and so he was interested in the stoolie's story. But he had gotten it second hand. They had let the drunk go free, not thinking it worthwhile to book him.

The stoolie was killed even before he had a chance to get another drink in him.

Well, Duffy thought, Sentar's my baby, might as well go out and bring him in. He turned his head again as the blood became a nuisance to him, and let it drool. And for the first time was made aware he was not alone on this furry beast. A hand cased in leather smacked him across the mouth. For a second there was a red haze of pain and anger blinding him. But the iron control asserted itself and forced calmness into his brain.

I'll have my day, Duffy said to himself. They didn't kill me . . .

He went back to his previous thoughts: It had been a planet in a small-systems Universe, one which had been plotted for navigation purposes. And so they had a recording of languages and of culture patterns. Duffy had had a language-denominator schedule on himself before going off with the patrol ship. He remembered, too, the smile on the technician's lips when he came out of it . . .

"What's so funny?" he had asked.

"Don't know yet," the technician had answered. "Just wondering how it'll hit you."

Well, Duffy thought ruefully, he hadn't bothered asking for an explanation. And now it was too late.

The present asserted itself in a series of continuing jolts as the riders broke their mounts into a gallop. He could hear the clatter of many hoofs, and soon he was enveloped in clouds of choking red dust. Time passed wearily and painfully and still the riders galloped. The shock of the personal blow he had taken passed, but now he was being reminded of the long tumble down the cliff. It seemed every bone and muscle had known the edge of the broken rock stubble he had landed in at the bottom of the cliff.

"Wish to hell this'd end," he whispered.

His wish had not long before its realization. The gallop slowed to a trot, the trot to a walk, and presently there

were the sounds of rough voices in greeting. And where there had been hard packed earth before, they clattered over cobblestones now. They had entered a town of some kind. But their destination was not the town itself.

It was not long before they reached their goal.

Suddenly the sweat-soaked animal Duffy was being carried on slid to a halt, and Duffy was flung head over heels to the ground. He had had a second's warning, and so fell limply. As it was, a whole Universe, until now, undiscovered, passed before his eyes as he landed heavily on the back of his head before rolling to a halt on his back.

But now, at last, he was able to see his captors.

Humans, thank the Lord, he thought. The others, the animal kinds, were always harder to deal with, harder to reach, harder to come to the same level of understanding. He was thankful for one fact. The bleeding had subsided to a thin trickle, now. He peered at them through slitted eyes. They were twelve in number, big men, dressed in loose-fitting leather garments topped by conical leather helmets. Their arms were a short sword and a knife, thrust between a leather belt and their outer garments. Duffy noted the heavy leather gloves, also. No wonder he had felt as if a mule had kicked him when his captor hit him.

From this survey he established civilization at about fifteen hundred A. D. Earth time.

A couple of men came up from behind and hauled him erect.

Facing him was a man. Tall as Duffy, he was considerably thinner, with long gaunt features on which a wispy pointed beard somehow looked as if it had been badly pasted. And instead of the leather costume, this one wore a loose-fitting robe. The sun behind him gave a scarecrow look to the long skinny shanks outlined starkly under the garment.

"What is this?" the man asked. There was merely annoyance in his voice.

"We had been hunting, Great One, when Tiro, one of my men . . ."

"I did not ask for an explanation," the Great One said.

"He looks like another of those who come from beyond the sky," Duffy's captor said. "We thought the Queen and we . . ."

"Yes, yes, the Queen. You

thought she might need another. He was alone?"

"I sent a party to the top of the cliff. There was nothing."

"Nor any sign of a ship . . ." another said quickly. "I was one . . ."

Now the Great One's voice was petulant: "Oh, for the Queen's sake! Enough! This gabble . . . What is wrong with this one? His tongue tied? . . ."

"It's about the only thing that isn't," Duffy spoke up. "You always treat strangers like this?"

"Why must they always ask the same question?" the Great One asked of no one in particular. His eyes were lifted skyward. They came level with Duffy's, and he took a couple of steps forward until he was inches from the other.

Now Duffy saw the flat coldness of the man's dark pupilless eyes, saw the cruelty of his mouth, and felt, somehow, that this man could hurt, maim, kill, without regard or thought.

"Pah!" the Great One backed off. "He stinks! What he needs is a bath. Perhaps he is not a man, after all . . ."

Duffy felt cold fear grip him at the sound of inhuman laughter the remark brought out. It hadn't been that funny . . .

Now there were hands pawing at the leg irons, and shortly they clanked to the ground. But powerful hands held him prisoner, and though he struggled he was rushed forward through a gate opened by one of them, and shoved forward. He was in utter darkness, as he stumbled forward a few feet, and suddenly there was nothing solid under his feet, nothing but a slickness and steep slant and he was sliding into the unknown.

Bright sunlight greeted him. But only an instant. Then he plunged downward into a cold watery depth. He struggled upward, and broke the surface and and gulped life-saving air. He treaded water, the space suit serving almost as a life jacket even though it was torn in half a dozen spots. He was an excellent swimmer, and was quick to note that the water on this planet had a buoyancy greater than even the ocean Earth water. Even encumbered by the space suit, and shackled by the hand irons he knew he could stay afloat for hours. But the reason for the plunge, and the shouted laughter of its announcement was not clear.

He treaded water, turning as he did, and saw how small the pool was; not more than fifty feet in diameter. But he

was also quick to note that the lip of the pool slanted upward away from the water line until it hung a full two feet out of the water, and out of his reach. And the pool itself was set in an iron-barred enclosure. But it was the row on row of stone steps, already filling with shouting, shoving, leather-clad men that gave him pause, as if he were on stage in some horrible amphitheatre.

The sudden whip-like lashes of pain which struck a dozen parts of him drove all thoughts from his mind. He struck out furiously in a wild stroking, cursing the irons which bound his hands together. He wanted only to tear the clothes from his body. Now there were more points of sudden fire streaking his skin, as if a horde of ants had managed somehow to secrete themselves beneath his clothes and had taken advantage of this moment to attack. But as he lifted his arms in a stroke he saw . . .

Three on the back of one hand, two on the other.

Jelly-like things, blood red, pulsing in blood-sucking action.

Leeches . . .

Horror turned his blood to ice, made his mind go blank, and brought a single shriek from him. It was that sound, and what followed, which saved him. For echoing hard on his despairing voice, there came a roar of laughter from the rows of wild-eyed spectators.

So that's why you laughed before, he thought. You knew. Knew, and wouldn't even give me a fighting chance. Shackled. Well, damn you, you wanted to know if I was a man. Then watch this man, this man who is better than any of you.

He brought his hands to his mouth and tore the leeches free with his teeth and spat them out. Then he drove hard against the wall of the pool whipping his body around against the rough stone face of it, closing his eyes against the water, and praying hard that none of the leeches would find a resting place on his face.

It was strange, but he did not think that he was playing a losing game.

Time went by. It meant nothing. He had no measure of how many leeches he had torn from his hands with his teeth. He could no longer taste his blood. Nor was he even aware of the agony which covered him like a well-worn blanket. He knew only that

when the time came for him to go he would do so silently, as a man should in a moment like this, if only that man must always be aware of his own reality . . .

He did not feel the hook take hold of him, nor did he know that instant of release from the horror-filled water. Only seconds before, there had been a last wild agony too much for the mind to take, and darkness had covered him in protective unconsciousness . . .

He was aware, first, that he was naked. Well, almost so. A loin cloth was his only covering. Then he felt the gentle hands. They were massaging an unguent into his skin. And next he was aware of the room and the people in it. First there was only the woman. She stood out sharply, as if his eyes were the lenses of a camera which had a focus only of her. And it was only her face which held his attention. But he knew that from this moment on he could never forget her, so that if the time came he could draw that face in absolute detail from the web of memory. Such beauty he had never before seen. Or such sadness in a person's eyes.

She faded from sight, and others came starkly into focus. The Great One at her side, hooded eyes searching Duffy's own still impersonal, still frigid with cruelty. Then, on her other side, the figure and face of someone familiar, but for the moment, a stranger. But not so some of the half-naked men on their knees behind these three. There were a half dozen of these Duffy recognized. Outlaws all, some with prices on their heads, some presumed to have died and so had been forgiven their misdeeds, and others only recently escaped from some jail, their faces still fresh in Duffy's memory as if their wanted posters were being passed before his eyes.

Now Duffy could hear as well as see them. He had missed something of what had been said, though what was being said made sense.

The man whose face was familiar said: ". . . Inspector Duffy. Sure I know him. A cop! Lot of fat good it'll do him here. You should of let him get thin in the pool . . ."

And now Duffy recognized him, also. Milo Sentar, the man he had come to get.

His eyes turned to the girl. She was answering Sentar: "His silence was a sign of great courage. I liked that.

Besides, I don't ever allow *anyone* to usurp *my* prerogative!"

"Again, your pardon, my Queen," the Great One said softly. "It is not given the lowly to have your all-seeing eye . . ."

"Enough, Vaya! There are times your tongue wags too freely, and too glibly. Save it for your petty intrigues. If it were not for my father's wish . . ."

Vaya bowed, and though he was motionless, Duffy got the impression his body was being shaken by convulsive laughter. Someday, Duffy thought, I'm going to meet up with you. Comes that day . . .

But now the girl was speaking again: "When the healing oils have taken hold have him dressed and brought to my private chambers . . ."

It was the signal for the end of the strange audience she had granted. A covered palanquin was brought to her side. Several of the half-naked men became a number of steps for her. It was Milo Sentar whose hand she took at the last when she stepped forward and into the opening. And it was Sentar who drew a whip from his belt and snapped it on the backs of the human bearers who trotted off with the Queen.

It wasn't till then that Duffy saw those who had been in attendance on him. A half dozen young and almost completely nude girls. He closed his eyes, felt a flush of embarrassment and managed to soften his voice to a muffled shout: "Get out! All of you! And don't come back till you learn how to dress . . ."

She motioned for him to take the low backless stool in front of her. Duffy smiled, and shook his head. "If it will please you that I stand," he said, "may I be allowed to do so?"

"Very well," she replied. She made a small gesture and Milo Sentar, who had been standing behind the throne on which she sat, stepped to her side. "I have been told you are with the space police," she went on.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Duffy said.

"Why are you here? Don't you know this is an arrest-free Universe, made so by the laws of the Inter-Space Federation?"

"If I may correct your Majesty; not arrest-free. Only that no weapons may be brought onto the planets."

"And why are you here?"

"To make an arrest, of course. The man at your side,

Milo Sentar, wanted for murder."

"He sought sanctuary. I granted it."

"To all the outlaws, murderers, space-scum? . . ."

"How-dare-you! I had you pulled from that infested pool; I can have you thrown back . . ."

Sentar made no effort to hide the pleased smile.

Duffy said nothing, but his eyes held hers for a long moment. It was she who turned away.

Her fingers played a nervous rat-a-tat on the arm of the throne. "I admire courage," she said at last. "Even the foolhardy kind. But without the brain directing it, it becomes only boring at the end. I gained an impression of intelligence in you."

Duffy remained silent.

". . . Strength, courage, intelligence," she went on. "I can offer you many things."

"Only one," Duffy said gently. "Milo Sentar."

"Perhaps even him." The gentleness in her voice matched Duffy's.

Duffy saw Sentar stiffen in shocked amazement, caught the sudden look of wild-eyed anger Sentar threw at the girl on the throne and mistook the clenched fist Sentar drew at his side as a gesture against her. Duffy leaped forward and sent a short hard chop to Sentar's jaw. The blow sent the other backward. But even as Sentar staggered he drew the short sword under his belt.

"This time you get it!" Sentar shouted as he found firm footing and came at Duffy.

Duffy had to let him get close.

The wide razor-sharp blade passed between Duffy's arm and body. Duffy brought his own arm under and up hard against Sentar's elbow with his left hand. At the same time he brought his right arm back, then in, the point of his own elbow catching Sentar just below the ear. Sentar went limp for an instant, hanging only by Duffy's supporting left arm.

The sword clattered to the floor, as Duffy let Sentar slide free.

A half dozen guards bore Duffy backward, before he could take advantage of Sentar.

"Leave him free!" the Queen commanded. Tense and electric as the situation was, Duffy had to admire her calm command. The guards released him, and stepped back to stand at their previous stiff attention. Sentar got to his feet, and face drained of blood, resumed his stance at

the Queen's side. Only the blazing eyes showed his hate and anger. "Now all of you, except this man, leave! . . . Sentar! Bring Vaya here. But do not enter until I grant permission. Go." She waited until the room was empty. "Now," she said to Duffy, "why did you attack him?"

"He clenched his first, as though to strike you," Duffy said simply.

"Fool! Oh, you fool! Am I a market girl that you fight over me? Am I not a Queen? . . ."

"Perhaps men see the woman, first," he said.

Suddenly she rose, and for a second stood stock-still. She was wearing a snow-white tunic-like garment of silky material. It's only ornamentation was a banding of gold braid around the neckline. The braiding continued down the middle of the gown, passing just below each breast and around the back. Her breasts were outlined, high and firm, and suddenly rising and falling in emotion.

Then she was before him, her eyes dark and limpid with a look of hunger, searching his own. "You were not like the others," she whispered. "There was only you threshing the water, and your teeth gleaming as you tore the leeches free. But, oh, so silently. How many times I have had to sit in the seat of judgment by the Pool of Purity. How many hundreds of voices I have heard shrieking their death agony. Sometimes, they come back to me in the dark stillness of the night, and I have to cover my ears. But even so . . . Yet you were silent. And I knew I had to grant your freedom . . ."

It seemed the most natural thing for Duffy to do, yet he wasn't conscious that she was now in his arms, her face pressed against his shoulder.

". . . They tore your clothes free, and I saw the welts against the pale skin, and I was suddenly frightened that I had acted too late. You seemed scarcely to breathe. Oh, I prayed to my father's memory that I had not been too late." She pulled her head away and looked into his face, her lips parted, and her eyes filled with a look such as Duffy had never seen on a woman before.

He kissed her.

For a second her lips seemed not to know his action. Then she was answering his kisses with a passion so strangely virginous it frightened Duffy. He put his hands against the dark mass of soft hair and

gently pulled her head back and looked down into her eyes.

"You were the first to say this to me; that I am a woman first," she whispered. Her eyes were closed. "The prophecy was: 'A stranger shall come from beyond the sky . . .' I don't know . . . I don't know." Her voice was troubled, strained. "I thought it was the other. He, too, was strong, and he spoke of things ordained. That I shall rule this Universe. He has plans; I know them all." Now her eyes were open, holding Duffy's in a look of intense attention. "Vaya doesn't trust him, despite the prophecy. But Sentar is so sure. He has a couple of hundred men to whom I've given sanctuary, hidden in the hills. He says he can get space ships." She was speaking rapidly now, as if these were thoughts bottled up too long and now released under pressure. "Sentar is so sure. He says he can bring the men in, that once they have passed through the Garden of Forgetfulness they will become slaves to my will, as all the other Outsiders are. Only Sentar, alone, because I did not want him to, has not been into the Garden. But behind his strength is a purpose I do not know, and I fear it. There is great wealth on one of the planets. Jewels and precious metals. And a simple race of people, without weapons.

"Duffy!" Her voice was deep, passionate, almost wild. "Man of strength. You, I trust; you can be the one of the Prophecy! Stand by my side. You and I together. This night Sentar shall go to the Garden of Forgetfulness . . ."

It seemed so clear to Duffy. All this build-up . . . But the acted-out innocence, the look of rapturous love. All a fake. She was like all the others he had known; the doublecross in the end . . .

He put his hands roughly against her shoulders and shoved her away from him.

"I don't play sucker for anyone! Not even for a Queen! Find another boy. There's only one thing I want, Sentar . . ."

She had recovered from his action, and stood quite still, and somehow taller than her height. "I offered you the love of a Queen," she said, as if in reverie. Then imperiously: "Vaya! Sentar! . . ."

They entered so quickly it seemed they were just outside the door, waiting her orders. Behind them came a dozen guards. Cold steel gleamed as the guards closed in about

Duffy, their weapons held ready.

"Vayya," she said, "this Outsider is only a fool, after all. But we can use his strength. The Garden of Forgetfulness ! . . ."

The fading sun touched the Garden with gentle light. Never had Duffy seen such a profusion of flowers, such colors or shapes. Their beauty was overwhelming. Duffy forgot the sword points pressing lightly against his throat on either side, forgot the other guards close behind, even forgot, for a while, the loveliness and wonder and treachery of the girl back there in the too-large room, the girl lost in a crazy dream. He saw only this wild profusion of Nature's beauty, and wondered.

Wondered at more than these too-beautiful blooms.

There was a bird, small as his little finger, pressed close against a flower, yet so utterly still it seemed frozen to it. And another bird, in the branch of that tree directly in their path. The bird seemed filled with song; he could even see the swelling throat. Yet no sound came from it . . .

Vaya, at the head of the procession, just a few steps in advance of Duffy, suddenly stopped and bent over a cluster of pale blue-and-pink buds. He sniffed loudly. But when he turned his head upward to look at Duffy there was an oddly troubled look in his eyes. "This cluster of buds," he said. "It reminds me of something. Yet I cannot place the odor. An innocence, like the fragrance of a child's kiss. Does it not give you that feeling?"

Duffy bent and sniffed. "All I can say," he said, "is that your sense of smell is all in your imagination."

"I say," Vaya said sharply, "the odor reminds me of a child's kiss."

"And I say," Duffy said just as shortly, "you're suffering from too much imagination. So let's just continue with this stupid walk."

Vaya suddenly looked as if he were going to faint. He paled to a dead white color. "The Prophecy . . . The Queen was right. You are he who has come from beyond the sky . . ."

"Great One . . . Great One . . ." a broken voice called from somewhere behind them.

As if the same thought possessed each of them, they turned as one man and ran back to where the voice called. A man was lying outstretched. A wide ribbon of blood seeped from under his body. He was lying face down

on the path. Vaya knelt at his side and turned his face to one side. A bloody froth bubbled from the man's lips.

"What happened?" Vaya demanded.

"The—Queen—Sentar had men—couldn't stop—him—took the—Queen . . ." He lifted his head, the eyes rolled upward, and set in a death stare.

The Queen's chambers were a bloody mess. A dozen dead men strewed the floor. And the passage to the rear gate was slick with blood. Here, too, men had died to save their Queen. The picture was clear to both Vaya and Duffy. Sentar had taken advantage of their absence and had taken the opportunity to strike.

But it was at the entrance to the huge stables that the full import of Sentar's treachery was felt. Not a single animal was to be seen.

Duffy and Vaya stood side-by-side. Behind them a cluster of grim-faced men waited in silence. Duffy threw a quick glance at the man beside him. Gone was the sardonic expression on Vaya's face, gone the secret look of deep amusement. It was as if the face were hewn from granite. There was no question of Vaya's loyalty.

"You knew as much as she," Duffy said. "How many men does he have? What kind of arms? Where are they?"

Vaya didn't look at him. "Why do you want to know?"

"I've come a long way for this man, Sentar. He's going back with me. Alive."

"You want only him?" Vaya asked. He turned and stared into Duffy's eyes.

"I came only for him," Duffy replied. "But that seemed a long time ago, all of a sudden, and now he isn't so important to me."

"She is only a child," Vaya said. "You could make a woman of her. But first we must find her. And I tell you, it is hopeless. She wouldn't listen . . ."

"Later! Tell me later. Why is it hopeless?"

"These men he has are armed with strange and terrible weapons. Our swords and knives . . ." Vaya shrugged his shoulders in an empty gesture.

"Do you know where this hideout is?" Duffy asked.

"Yes. But now I'm afraid. I've sent for riding animals, but it will be dark before they come."

"How long a ride does Sentar have?"

"Till daybreak. His place is deep in the hills. I was

there once. Oh, it isn't hard to find, but what do we do when we find it?"

"Leave that to me," Duffy said. "Get me two things. One; a man who can get us back to the spot I was taken prisoner. Two; mounts for both of us."

"Three of us," Vaya said. "I am with you."

Vaya was as good as his word. But half the night was gone by the time they got to the space-sled. Duffffy worked quickly to establish contact with the patrol ship. There was no more wonderful sound than that of the operator coming in with his, "I read you, Inspector. Come in. Over . . ."

Duffy asked for the Captain, explained in a few words the needs he had and concluded: "I am coming in with a man on board. Prepare for an armed landing. Will explain when I get aboard. Over and out." The patrol ship, already a gleaming silver from the first rays of the sun, hung low over the still dark hills. Below decks the last of the troop sleds had dropped free. Already five hundred men were in position for the attack. In the control tower Duffy was buckling on a side-arm blast gun. The sun's rays dappled the hills below suddenly. And Duffy knew the moment had come.

He motioned for Vaya to follow.

A short time later he was at the wheel of a two-man carrier. Vaya sat beside him. To the left and right the men from the patrol ship were in a huge semi-circle around the base of the hill on which Milo Sentar had his base.

Slowly Duffy drove ahead until he was halfway up the hill. He stopped there. He bent forward, fiddled with the power control, took up the hand mike and spoke into it. His voice, magnified a thousand times, rolled upward.

"Sentar. In the name of the Inter-Space Federation I call upon you to surrender."

And from the heights above came back a thin sound of human words: "Don't make us laugh. They'll have your hide for this, Duffy. You don't have the legal right . . ."

"Thirty seconds and we blast," Duffy said.

"You can't! The law's on our side. No armed intervention, remember?"

"You plotted a planet invasion. The picture's changed. Sixteen seconds. All you men who surrender now, get a fair trial. Ten seconds."

"The girl. You'll kill her." There was panic in Sentar's voice.

And now there were men scrambling down the hill, hands up high, shouting their surrender.

"Seven seconds, six, five, four, three, two . . ."

Beside him Vaya was saying, "You can't. You can't. She is there with him . . ."

It was as if Duffy was made of stone, as he tolled the seconds.

"Wait!" Sentar screamed. "Wait!"

It was what Duffy had been waiting for. He unhooked the blast gun, and tossed it on Vaya's lap. Then he leaped from the carrier and started up the hill. Almost at the top a rock to one side suddenly powdered into dust. A second later the heat of a blast gun singed the hair from his head. Now Duffy began a zigzag run up to the crest. He had seen Sentar, only a hundred or so yards off. Sentar had one arm around the girl. She was struggling but without avail. Sentar lifted the short-barreled gun once more. And once more Duffy twisted to one side. The concussion of the exploding shot made him stumble, and lose his balance. He went on his knees.

And Sentar, a look of wild fury on his face came charging down. Duffy rose to his feet. In his right hand he clutched a rock. Twenty feet separated the two. Sentar, without pausing quickly lifted the gun, just as Duffy hurled the rock. Sentar ducked, and as he did, skidded over a piece of shale. His feet flew out from under him, and he landed heavily on his back.

Duffy kicked the gun out of his hand.

Sentar fought like an animal. Twice he broke loose and went for the gun, and twice Duffy brought him down with a flying tackle. And once again Sentar broke free. This time it was Duffy who skidded on the rocks as he started toward Sentar.

Then Sentar had the gun, was aiming it carefully, a crazy grin on his face. Duffy lay helpless, watching him. The finger curled with slow pleasure about the trigger. Slowly, go slowly.

The rock she hit Sentar with lifted his hair up in a quick puff. A faint look of surprise registered in his eyes before they rolled upward, as his knees gave way and he fell forward onto his face.

She was cradling Duffy's head in her arms when the others came up. Tears were streaming from her eyes. She was saying, "He loves me. He said so, first. He loved me

from the beginning. He said that too . . ."

The Captain and Lieutenant squatted beside them. They noticed the contented smile on Duffy's lips. Duffy's eyes were wide open, but he didn't seem to be seeing anything.

The Captain said: "Better get the surgeon, Ray. Duffy looks bad."

"Don't say that," she said. "He looks wonderful. That horrible Sentar's lying there. Why don't you go to him?"

"Lady," the Captain said, "you hit him a pretty good whack. He'll be out for hours. This is more interesting. What you do to Duffy?"

"Nothing. Oh, nothing! He took me in his arms and kissed me and said he loved me, but that he was going to spank me first, whatever that is, then he was going to have me up for trial, and then he was going to marry me. And all of a sudden he looked like this."

"Your Majesty," Vaya spoke from behind her. "Perhaps you might tell him he loves you? . . ."

She turned to look at Vaya, then looked quickly down at Duffy. Her voice was low, and suddenly amused: "Tell me you love me," she said.

And like a parrot answering, Duffy said, "I love you."

"And I love you, my darling," she said.

The surgeon came up just then. He gave Duffy a narrowed glance. "This man looks like he is drugged. What's going on?"

It was Vaya who explained: "The flowers in the Garden of Forgetfulness exert a type of hypnotic spell. For some reason they do not affect us. But all others are affected. I don't know why Duffy wasn't, until now."

The surgeon gave vent to a burst of sudden laughter. "Of course. When they gave him the language-denominator survey. Very often a man loses part or all of a sense. We never know what one will be hit. His sense of smell was lost. As soon as that sense returned the brain gave him the message it had been holding. Just a delayed action.

"Say you love me," she was saying to Duffy.

"I love you," he answered.

But she didn't see the wink he gave to all the others as she bent to kiss him . . .

THE END

WORLD OF TRAITORS

By ROG PHILIPS

Things were rough in Voria; worse in Sokia. The governments of both nations were riddled with spies. Even the prime ministers were suspect. The big questions were —who was trying to betray who to whom? For what reasons? And how long had it been going on?

KER OOM turned the pages of the pictorial weekly, studying the reproductions of pictures taken through the nine thousand inch satelite telescope. They were closeups of the closest inhabited planet to Par, fifty light years away. Planet Two, the astronomers had named it. These pictures, some of them, were of geometrical patterns of dots that could only be street lights in cities at night.

That was proof enough, but in addition pinpoints of light had been observed on Two traveling at speeds of two to six hundred miles an hour, proof of air travel. Two was the third planet out from its sun and had one large moon. The planet had the same period of revolution as Par, was larger but had the same surface gravity, and had the same radiation intensity from its smaller sun because it was closer to it. Even its year was about that of Par's—only three days shorter.

Par, of course, was the seventh planet out from its sun, and had two moons. It was interesting that there was another inhabited planet so similar to Par . . .

Ker Oom put aside the magazine and leaned back, closing his eyes. He wondered if there were one government, two, or many, on planet Two. He smiled to himself. Very soon now Par would have only one government. The end of the road was in sight. Today he, Ker Oom, had taken the oath of office and become President of Voria. In the morning he would go to the Capitol Build-

They watched, grim-faced, as a world exploded.

ing and begin his first day as President of Voria, second largest nation on Par.

He smiled. Tonight the people of Voria slept peacefully in their beds, never suspecting that he, the man they had elected to their highest office, was not a Vorian, but a Sokian spy who had spent forty years rising to the position he now held. And now Sokia would soon rule the planet.

Ker didn't know yet just what the details of the final plan were. He would get his orders—perhaps straight from Sonji himself—in a few days, no doubt. In his own mind though Ker Oom had built up a pretty good idea of what would happen. In a few weeks Dictator Sonji would precipitate a few incidents of a threatening nature, and he, President Oom, would send stern notes to Sonji, so worded that if Sonji did such-and-such he, Oom, would have to declare war and plunge Voria and Sokia into global conflict. All the thousands of Sokian spies like himself in command positions in the armed forces, and even in the Senate, elected by the people, thanks to the fact that both political organizations had Sokian spies in control of them and able to dictate who the two parties would choose for candidates, would ensure the Vorian attack and the defense would be so poorly conducted that it would quickly fail. Then he, President Oom, swiftly, before anyone in Voria could realize what was happening, would surrender unconditionally to Sokia, and Sonji would become the ruler of the whole planet.

In a matter of a few days the surrender could be completed, and Sokian troops could take over the nuclear bomb stockpiles of Voria and transport all those bombs to Sokia. From that moment on Sokia would forever rule the other nations because making new bombs was too gigantic an enterprise for any nation or underground group to ever hope to make them in complete secrecy.

It made Ker Oom dizzy to realize that world domination could be such a simple and permanent thing, thanks to the awful power of the thermonuclear bombs which made one bomb have the destructive power of a million man force with non-nuclear weapons, coupled with the fact that no group anywhere could hope to make such bombs in secret. That last fact made successful revolt impossible forever.

And actually it was the

only hope for peace the planet had, short of all-out suicidal war. This way was merciful, swift, with a minimum loss of life. Once conquest was an accomplished fact all nations could relax from their war tensions, including the betrayed Voria.

No more costly nuclear bombs would have to be made because Sonji and the Central Committee, and all who came after them forever, would have all there were—enough to wipe the planet out of existence if they all went off at once. Fear would be a thing out of ancient history in a few centuries. Maybe Sonji or his successor from the Central Committee when he died of old age might have to order one or two of the bombs dropped before the rest of Par came to recognize the futility of trying to bring back the old conditions. After that, Peace forever. Peace and Law, stemming from the Central Committee.

Well, no use wasting mental effort speculating about the details. They would come from Sonji in a few days and he, President Oom, would follow them to the letter. Meanwhile all Voria could sleep in peace, unaware that it would soon be jerked out of its complacent stupidity.

A wave of pity settled over Ker Oom for this nation of Voria. It was impossible not to admire these Vorians once you knew them, and he knew them as well or better than they knew themselves—as only a foreigner who has spent a lifetime of study of an enemy people can know them. They were a grand nation, lacking only the clear thinking necessary to seeing the logical way of forever ending global wars with little risk of failure and almost no destruction involved. Or perhaps they could see it but didn't have the courage to act.

Yes, he knew these Vorians well—actually better than he knew his own people, the Sokians. It had been forty years since he had left Sokia to be smuggled into Voria and assume the identity of a Vorian according to the carefully standardized routine of having each spy have an authentic history. When he had first taken the identity of the original Ker Oom, born in Boln, Sankas, he had not dreamed of the possibility of ever becoming the key to the whole plan. And now the village of Boln boasted of being his birthplace!

He had played his role so well that sometimes he almost believed it. Sometimes he had

to think to remember his own name, the one that would really go down in history as soon as Sonji ruled the planet.

He was born Arj Rad, in the little hamlet of Crewst at the foot of the Berl Mountains, sixty years ago. It seemed almost unreal. But his first twenty years of life in his native land were still quite vivid sometimes — especially from his tenth to his twentieth years when he was being crammed to the ears with the million and one details that could enable him to pass as a native Vorian with no possible suspicion. Those had been grueling years, years that he had hated at the time, but now he could view them fondly, knowing their purpose, seeing their fruits, feeling the strength that comes from rigid discipline.

Those ten grueling years had seemed like they would never end. Then, without warning, they had, and a few days later he had swam from a submarine to a spot on the west coast of Voria where two spies were waiting to pick him up. Three days later he was inland, already Ker Oom to those around him, an aspiring young law student fresh out of college. He had never bothered to question what had become of the real Ker Oom. Possibly that identity had been chosen because the real Ker Oom had died just then. Or maybe the real Ker Oom had been killed and buried in quicklime. It was unlikely that he would have been spirited out of Voria and imprisoned for life in Sokia.

After that beginning, forty years ago, he had advanced rapidly both in public life and in the secret organization of the spy complex, learning to feel the double pulse of the two hearts that beat in the affairs of the nation it was his destiny to destroy.

Ten years after coming to Voria he had met Silya, a spy who had been in Voria only three years. She had been born near the Berl Mountains too, and their common memories drew them together. Eventually permission came through for them to marry. They had had four children, and none of those children would ever suspect that their parents were alien spies, even after Voria surrendered, because the true cause of defeat would never be known. President Oom would still be President, "permitted to retain his office by the good graces of Dictator Sonji," and no breath of suspicion would ever be directed his way.

It was all perfect. Perfect

in a way that no process of a democracy can ever be perfect with its divided authority and multiplicity of mind.

Ker Oom felt a gentle touch on his arm and opened his eyes, and smiled up at his wife Silya. She said, "Don't you think you should go to bed, dear? Tomorrow may be a critical day for you."

"Yes, of course," he said. He reached up and took her hand. They looked into each other's eyes, sharing their secret as they had always shared it, unspoken.

The reporters, press photographers, movie cameras, TV cameras, and secret service agents were getting in one another's way, jockeying for favored positions. Ker Oom, flanked by secret service agents assigned to protect him, strode up the wide concrete walk to the Capitol Building steps, went up to the third step where he would be above the crowd on the lawns, and turned to face the cameras. His memorized off-the-cuff speech, received through the usual channels and freshly memorized less than an hour ago, was short and to the point.

Looking directly into one camera lense after another, his expression stern and filled with grim determination, he said in his smooth oratorical voice, "My friends, at this moment I am about to take over my responsibilities and obligations as President and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of this, our land, the citadel of freedom, and in the days to come I will face my duty squarely, whatever it may be. If—may God forbid—armed aggression comes to threaten our destruction, I will—God willing—meet force with mightier force, with crushing force. But if—God grant—I can steer our ship of State through the shoals of threatening catastrophe into the safe and secure harbor of peace, I shall do so. *But no compromise with honor shall swerve me in my loyalty until death to my native land.*"

Ker Oom's voice shook with the intensity of his inner conviction as he completed his brief speech. He did love his native land, the land of his birth. He would have given his life unhesitatingly for Sokia if it had ever been necessary. But such a sacrifice would never be necessary. Not only he, but the Vice President and almost half of the Senate were Sokian spies. They controlled Voria absolutely, and if they were all killed tomorrow Sokian spies

controlled the political parties of Voria and had enough spy power in reserve to be sure all the new key officials would also be dedicated Sokians.

He had slept little during the night, anxious to have the morning come. One of his first duties, he felt sure, would be to get the list of all Vorian agents operating in Sokia and send it to Dictator Sonji so they could be quietly rounded up. That would be the necessary first step before the phoney war could be started, and only the President and the head of the Vorian Secret Service would have access to that list.

He didn't know yet if the head of the Secret Service was a Sokian spy or not. Perhaps before the day was over he would know.

He smiled into the cameras and waved to the crowds on the lawns, then turned and walked up the wide shallow steps to the entrance to the Capitol Building. The outgoing President would be waiting for him. A good part of the day would be spent in private with him, going over any secret agreements or alliances Voria might have, and any other State secrets only the President could have access to.

Ker Oom chuckled as he entered the building. A few minutes later he and ex-President Corti shook hands cordially before more cameras, and each made a brief speech into those cameras for the TV broadcasts. Then they turned their backs on the cameras and went into the President's private office, and closed the door.

"Well, Ril," Ker said heartily, "It's too bad you lost the election this time. In my books you've been a damned good man in the office. I only hope I can do half as good a job."

"You can probably do much better," Ril said. "You're a good man. I've watched your career for the past several years, and I suspected quite some time ago that you were the best Presidential timber around to succeed me. I wasn't a bit surprised that you won."

"Thanks," Ker said. "I suppose you're anxious to get this out of the way, now that you're out."

"Naturally," Ril smiled. "There's quite a bit of stuff you have to go through today before you can properly orient yourself to your office. Secret agreements, policy structure inherited from my administration, the Secret Service global setup. So let's go down

to your real office where all of that is kept."

"My real office?" Ker said, startled.

Ril grinned and went to the wall, pointing to a certain spot that was nothing but blank wall. "Under here is the lock," he said. "It can only be worked by the President himself. No one else.

"What we have to do now is this: I place my hand over this area and a scanner examines it microscopically. While my hand is there you place yours next to mine. The scanner takes it in, too, memorizing it and automatically associating it with mine, with which it is already familiar. It takes six thousand points of familiarity for the lock to act. Because of the association of our two hands it will pick up those six thousand points of familiarity from your hand alone, next time. In six months the electronic memory of my hand will be forgotten through disuse, and only your hand will open the lock."

Ker placed his hand beside Ril's. Two minutes later Ker felt the wall move away from his hand. It moved back an inch and slid aside, revealing an elevator. When he and Ril stepped into the elevator the panel slid back into place swiftly and silently.

"You will notice," Ril said, pointing, "that there is one way glass so that you can make sure no one is in your upper office before stepping out—though actually that isn't necessary since the panel won't open if someone is in the room who shouldn't be. When we just opened it together it wouldn't have worked at all if you hadn't also placed your hand on the lock scanner because you would have been an extra party in the room."

The elevator dropped silently and swiftly, and stopped so gently that Ker wasn't aware that it wasn't still moving, when the new panel slid aside.

"We're seventy-five feet underground here," Ril said, striding into the large room filled with filing cabinets. "This is the secret heart of the nation, known only to Presidents in office, and," he grinned knowingly, "ex-Presidents.

"You'll probably spend an hour or two down here almost every day. It will take you a few weeks to know everything you have to know, and of course if you get stuck I'm the only one you can call on. I'll leave you a phone number

that can reach me wherever I happen to be in a hurry. For the first thirty days I will be always within touch. That will be my final obligation to office. I think the best way to cover ground in a hurry is to explain the outline of the Western Alliance Treaties to you."

"Okay," Ker said, feeling a little impatience for Ril to be gone so he could dive in uninterrupted.

Ril grinned knowingly. "You're in for a lot of surprises, Ker," he said. "This treaty business is absolutely fool proof and goes far beyond anything you could imagine in your wildest dreams."

Ker smiled smugly. "I'm afraid my wildest dreams are a trifle—shall we say—conservative?" Inwardly he chuckled.

Ril went to a filing cabinet and pulled open a drawer, carelessly. "You wouldn't believe it," he said, "but in this drawer alone are the government's original copies of all the existing treaties. There's even half a dozen signed by Dictator Sonji himself! The ones that should interest you first though are those of the Western Alliance. They concern primarily the problem of nuclear bomb storage."

Ril pulled out a thick folder and carried it over to a desk and opened it. "The big problem, you see," he said, "was that of a sudden and successful invasion of Voria by an enemy. If that happened and all our bombs were in Voria, the enemy could at once gain possession of them and the war would be over."

"Oh?" Ker said calmly, though his heart was pounding. He was thinking worriedly, *Oh, if these dirty patriots have spiked our chance to get all the bombs . . .*

Ril was not looking at Ker now, but at the map he had just spread out on the desk. "The Western Alliance nations, as you can see, are colored yellow on this map, and the locations of the bomb storage depots are the black circles. The numbers under the circles are the number of each inventory sheet listing the numbers and types of bombs in that depot. Each depot is a Vorian depot, of course, but the officers in charge of each depot have instructions for coordination and reprisal in case the Vorian Government is destroyed or falls into enemy hands. And *only the President* knows where all the storage depots are." Ril glanced up, flashing Ker a grin, then added, "The

ex-President too, you know, but one of your first duties will be to change things enough so that what I know will be obsolete. The government of each Western Alliance nation of course knows the location of each depot within its borders, but not the numbers and types of bombs stored there.

"Only you will know *all* the details and the locations of all the depots. The thing to bear in mind is that the bombs have to be spread around so that the destruction of any one government will leave enough power in the surviving ones to lick any enemy."

"Of course," Ker said, making a mental note to get all the bombs back into Voria as soon as possible. This was a complication that Dictator Sonji probably didn't know about. He would have to be informed before the day was out.

Ril folded up the map and placed it in the folder with the treaties, and put the folder back in the drawer. "You can study it all in your leisure," he said carelessly. "You get the idea behind it okay?"

"I think so," Ker said. "If I don't I'll get in touch with you later."

Ril went to another file cabinet and pulled open a drawer. "This," he said, "Is something even more important than bombs. It's the file of *all* Vorian agents and spies in every country all over the world. This is something that not even your head of Secret Service will know. He will never know more than ninety percent of the names in here, and of course you have final say on everything in that department."

The ex-President slammed the drawer shut and pulled open the one below it. "This one is also top secret, and only you have *all* the names in it. This contains the names of all enemy agents in Voria. Each of them is permitted to go about his business for some reason or other, and it's all here. And below it is the file of all native Vorians who have switched their loyalty to some other country."

For another two hours Ril continued opening drawers and giving a rundown on their contents. By the time he was through Ker was finding it very difficult to conceal his impatience.

Finally Ril said, "Well, that's all. I know you're impatient for me to get out so you can go to work. I really wish I could stay and watch you. You're in for the biggest surprise of your life before

the day is over, when you get into all those files."

Then he was gone.

Ker Oom watched the door of the elevator slide shut, and the indicator above the door go up and stop at the top, remain there for a few seconds, then start back down. He waited until it had come down and the door had slid open, revealing the elevator to be empty.

Then he laughed, softly, triumphantly. His eyes shining, he turned and surveyed the room, the many filing cabinets. He was here, in the secret heart, the vital spot. How many years had it taken? Forty? Yes, and the teamwork of thousands of spies, infiltrating all the key posts, pulling the behind-the-scenes strings year after year. What mastery in intrigue there had been.

Always, when it was necessary, the stooges, the native born, the traitors, had been sacrificed on the alter of public indignation—but never one of the dedicated, none of those like himself who had spent their childhood in Sokia mastering the language and customs of Voria so that they could serve their country in a foreign land, passing as a native. And now—

Success!

He walked among the filing cabinets, caressing them fondly. He paused at the cabinet containing the drawer of names of Vorian agents in foreign countries. Under it was the drawer of alien agents in Voria. Was he himself, perhaps, listed in there?

He chuckled at the foolish notion. One shred of suspicion against him and Ril would have seen to it that he was exposed as soon as he entered the Presidential primaries. Still . . .

A capricious mood posessed him. Why not look?

He pulled open the drawer and looked. Ker Oom was not among those whose papers were in there, nor any other Oom. But wait! The names in here were all Sokian. If he was listed at all it would be under his real name, and that was—Arj Rad, of course.

He spread apart the dense file at the beginning of the R's and flicked the sheets of paper slowly. Raaf, Racji, Racuji, Rad. But the first name was Aar. Ker knew him, a very valuable man, only in Voria for five years now. He flicked to the next sheet.

And there it was. Arj Rad. Birthplace, Crewst, West Berl State, Sokia.

Suddenly Ker's forehead

was moist with nervous perspiration. How stupidly careless Ril had been. Here, all the time, had been the information that could have ruined the plans of forty years, but Ril had not made the connection.

The trouble was that this file was not cross indexed with Vorian name, of course. The only way Ril could have discovered that he was an enemy spy would have been for him to search through the whole file. There it was on the second line. Name being used in Voria . . . Ker Oom.

Intensely interested, Ker took the sheet out of the file and went over and sat down at the desk. Lord, the information on it was detailed. It began with his first entry, place and date, and the address where he had first lived. That had been a crummy hotel. He had only lived there two weeks and then had moved, but it was all there on this paper. The bottom of the page only took it to ten years ago.

Abruptly he turned the sheet over—and there it was. His eye caught it instantly. Two-thirds of the way down the page was the last notation. Inaugurated as President—and the date was yesterday!

For a long horrible sixty seconds Ker Oom's thoughts froze. How could this be?

This entry must have been made by Ril himself not earlier than yesterday afternoon. Was the man insane? A split personality, one part of him not knowing what the other part did?

The only other explanation was that—Ril was a traitor to his country! He had knowingly turned his country over to an enemy. The man should be made to pay for this! To be a spy in an enemy country, working a lifetime to bring victory to your native land was a noble thing, but to hold the highest office in your native land and then betray your country was unthinkable.

In fact, *it was unthinkable.* It couldn't happen. There had to be some other explanation.

Of course, it was equally unthinkable that Ril was like him, a native of Sokia. If that were the case, victory would have been possible shortly after Ril had taken office, years ago. Sokia would already be in control of all Par.

Of course! Ker Oom slapped his forehead at his stupidity. Ril had a secretary who kept entries up to date. That secretary must be a Sokian agent with a distorted sense of humor, to put all this on paper under the nose of the

acting President yesterday. If Ril had seen it he could have somehow stopped Ker from assuming office even though he had already taken the oath of office. That stupid secretary would have to be punished.

Ker was perspiring freely now, and using his handkerchief to wipe his forehead dry every minute or so. What careless disregard of common sense! Or was it?

Somehow the thought of a secretary with a distorted sense of humor didn't ring true. Was Ril, the ex-President, a Sokian? Against common sense, that seemed the only answer.

There was a way to find out. If he were, and since he had Ril's history in his files, he would have his own—*if* he were.

With a determined glint in his eye, Ker Oom took his sheet back and inserted it in the file, then began at the beginning and slowly turned over each sheet, reading until he found the Vorian name being used by the Sokian agent.

There were a lot of them. It took him an hour to come to the name, Bej Kodi. And it was all there. Ril was a Sokian named Bej Kodi.

It was insane. It was absolutely insane. Frowning, he took Bej Kodi's sheet from the file and returned to the desk to read it over. Kodi's history was very similar to his own. He had been born on the plains of Koki, in southern Sokia, and had entered Voria in the usual way, by submarine. From that point on their two careers were quite identical.

But it didn't make sense!

Ker shook his head in slow bewilderment. There had to be an explanation of some kind. Maybe things hadn't shaped up right during Ril's administration for the final act that would make Sokia and Dictator Sonji ruler of all Par. But that didn't sound right either. Surely, in eight years, it could have been maneuvered . . .

An empty feeling settled in the pit of Ker's stomach. If the time hadn't been right during Ril's administration it might not be during his own, and to be in the key spot at the culmination of his career and see nothing happen would be hard to take.

Maybe the problem of the bombs had something to do with it. If so—a feeling of contempt for Ril's abilities rose in him—he would solve the problem of getting possession of all the bombs and bring success.

A shadow of doubt entered

his thoughts. If Ril had not been able to solve it in eight years, could he solve it himself? Ril was not exactly a fool . . .

Anger at the Vorians possessed him. They were too shrewd, too smart. They had thought of everything and countered everything.

Did the bombs matter?

Once Sokia had Voria in its pocket it could rule the world anyway, and with exact information on the locations of the storage depots which he, Ker, could provide, it would be a simple matter for the combined might of Sokia and Voria to lick the other members of the Western Alliance and get all the bombs.

But that had been equally true eight years ago, under Ril.

Could it be? No. It was insane.

It was utterly impossible—

But . . .

No.

How silly could he get?

Nevertheless all it would take would be . . .

Ridiculous—yet . . .

In sudden, dogged, decision, he went back to the files and put Bej Kodi's paper away and closed the drawer. Then he pulled open the drawer above it and began with the first sheet and slowly began reading.

It took almost two hours. Eventually he came to the sheet that began, "Voor Cardna, born in Mulka, Puta, Voria." And on the other side of the sheet, Dictator Sonji!

Ker Oom's mind reeled under the blow of the realization that the man who held absolute authority over his native land was a spy, a native of Voria!

"No wonder—!" Ker Oom said aloud, horrified.

Somehow, some way, he would have to rescue his country from this dastardly treachery! But to whom could he go?

He would have to alert the entire spy personnel of Sokians in Voria as to the true state of affairs first. He would have to appoint one of them Ambassador to Sokia with the mission of assassinating Sonji.

The thing wrong with that was that Sonji must certainly have the duplicate of this complete file and would know the man calling on him was a loyal Sokian. Probably this Voor Cardna who ruled Sokia as Sonji had his own network of spies right here on his native soil that could keep him informed of things.

The point was that Sonji

undoubtedly knew that a native Sokian was in the seat of power of his own Voria, so why hadn't he done something to expose the enemy spy system that infiltrated and controlled the government of his own country?

Ker Oom paced back and forth in the underground room, trying to think. Two things were obvious now. Ex-President Ril had known Sonji was really a Vorian spy and had done nothing about it—or was unable to do anything about it. Sonji had by the same token known that Ril—and now he—was an enemy agent, and had done nothing about it. And from the thickness of the file on Vorian agents in Sokia another thing was becoming clear. In all probability *native Vorians dedicated to the service and safety of their homeland were the government of Sokia.*

Then why had they permitted native Sokians to receive training as spies and come over here to get control? There had to be an answer to this insanity. There had to be a way out of it.

What he would have to do would be to suddenly invade Sokia and wipe out every Vorian spy over there. But—send Vorian bombs and troops to fight his own native land? He shook his head. He couldn't possibly send these Vorians against his native land, order the enemy to kill his own people.

Nor would Sonji ever send Sokian troops and bombs to invade his own land.

It was a stalemate! Incredulous, unable to accept the obvious and inescapable true state of affairs, Ker Oom spread it out in his mind and scanned it for loopholes—but there were no loopholes.

Even if he wanted to break the stalemate by sudden aggression against his own land, Sokia, it was quite certain that Sokia's spies in Voria would conclude that he had gone mad and would keep him from doing it.

The final truth came to him. Absurd as it seemed, *war was an impossibility!*

In his mind's eye he looked at this vision, this concept of peace. He blinked his eyes and shook his head violently, but the vision remained. War was an impossibility.

Then why not keep things this way? He flinched away from the traitorous thought. His whole life had been dedicated to making his homeland triumphant over the whole planet and now he was having thoughts of leaving it in the

clutches of the enemy. The *clutches?*

Suddenly he laughed aloud. Clutches cliches. He was trying to superimpose the old concepts on the new and it wouldn't work. The real joke of the matter was that only he and Dictator Sonji knew the truth. Ex-President Ril too, of course, but he would keep his mouth shut. He undoubtedly believed in it and wanted it to continue.

A sense of peace flowed into him. For the first time in his life he was at the end of conflict, no longer driven by the fear of future disaster for his native land.

There were probably others who knew. This state of stalemate must have come into being by treaty—secret treaty that would have seemed high treason to anyone except those with the vision to grasp it.

Ker Oom went to the file drawer which Ril has so carelessly said contained a few treaties with Sokia. He thumbed through the treaties —and there it was. The Treaty of Permanent Peace. Just under the title was a brief quotation.

It read, "A wise judge, when confronted with the problem of dividing an inheritance between two brothers, handed down the ruling that one brother should do the dividing and the other brother should have first choice."

Ker Oom chuckled. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, within his power to do, which would not help Voria and hurt his native Sokia.

Suddenly he had had enough for one day. He put the treaty back in the file and went to the elevator.

A minute later he stepped out into his upper office. The sun was shining brightly through the windows. The leafy branches of a tree swayed slightly from a gentle breeze. A saucy little bird perched on the window ledge for a moment then darted away.

It was good to be President. Ker Oom wondered if he could be a wise one.

He sat down at his desk and flicked on the desk TV. A newscast was on. It was halfway through a rebroadeast of his inauguration. He watched himself as his voice intoned, "But if—God grant—I can steer our ship of State through the shoals of threatening catastrophe . . ."

Ker Oom smiled. He had not known then what he knew now.

A picture flashed onto the screen. It was a picture now

familiar to him, of a portion of the surface of planet Two, that inhabited planet fifty light years away. The voice on the speaker said, "Watch closely. We are going to show you a movie of what is unmistakably a plutonium bomb explosion on planet Two."

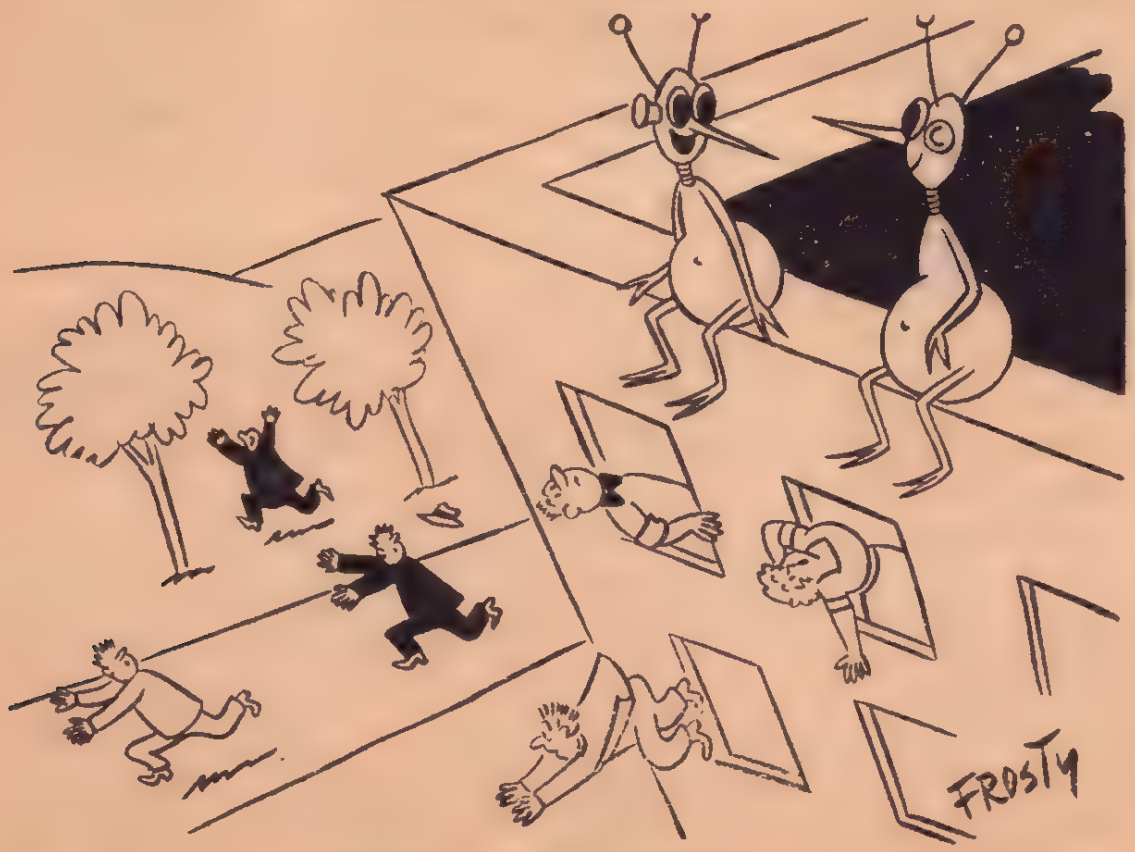
The still picture suddenly became a movie. A group of islands just off the coast of a continent became centered in the screen, and then enlarged until just one of the islands covered the screen, wavering considerably—probably from refraction in Two's atmosphere. A dot was moving toward the center of the screen over the land. Suddenly a spot of boiling light appeared. Ker Oom watched it. It was, definitely, a Plutonium bomb explosion.

So now Two also had the bomb. Now? *That was fifty years ago.*

Right now planet Two, third out from its sun and with one large moon, had had the nuclear bombs for fifty years. Had those people—or monsters or whatever they were—learned how to live with it in that time?

Or did — perhaps — planet Two no longer exist . . .

THE END



"The natives seem restless tonight!"

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THE COSMIC TRAP

By GERALD VANCE

Put two men and one woman in a spaceship. A situation loaded with danger, certainly. But in order to make an explosion inevitable, we'll make two of them husband and wife, and give them five years to work out their destinies. Any idea what those destinies will be? The end may surprise you.

IT HAS to be someplace," they kept telling one another, so they searched and searched, and finally they found it, the one thousand nine hundred and ninety-sixth corpse—or not quite a corpse yet since it still breathed.

"Ford!" George said, "I told you. I'll go get a canvas." He turned and padded away in the direction of the hold. Frieda and Max looked away from the body, then sought each other's eye for mutual comfort. Max said, "Well, that has to be the last one. There's no one left."

"But us," Frieda said. She reached up absently and scratched the bridge of her nose.

"Why did you do that?" Max asked sharply. .

"Do what?" Frieda asked.

"Scratch yourself," Max said.

"Did I?" Frieda said. "I wasn't aware of it."

"Here, let me see," Max said. He came close to his wife and peered closely at her nose while she whimpered with fear. After a moment he shook his head. "It doesn't look like a rash," he said. "Maybe it isn't. Let's hope not."

George came back, a folded-up canvas under his arm. He unfolded it and spread it out next to the corpse. "You keep out of the way, Alice," he said. "Max and I can handle this alone."

"Her name is Frieda, not Alice," Max said angrily.

"Yeah," George said, looking at Frieda as though seeing her for the first time. "Yeah. I keep forgetting.

The most elemental urge in existence turned the men into beasts.

Alice was my wife, you know." He licked his lips and turned his face away. "Well, let's get busy, Max."

Max stared at him angrily another second or two, then went to work at one end of the canvas. With him at one end and George at the other, they managed to get the body rolled onto the canvas without having to touch it. Finally, they had the canvas wrapped around it so that, each of them taking an end, they could carry it. Frieda tagged along, and when they reached the airlock she went ahead and opened the inner hatch for them. Puffing, they half-dragged, half-carried their load into the airlock compartment and let it drop. They came out and closed the hatch. Max pressed the remote control button that would unlock the outer hatch and all three of them watched the outer hatch through the thick glass viewplate as it flew outward and the canvas-wrapped bundle shot away from the ship, blown by the escaping atmosphere in the lock. They saw it spin and the canvas unwrap just before it was lost to sight.

George became aware that his hip and shoulder were touching Frieda as they crowded in front of the viewplate. He moved away from contact. He was breathing quickly, but not from exertion this time. Frieda looked at him and smiled.

Max said. "Maybe we won't catch it. *Somebody* has to be immune to the damned thing."

The three ship's doctors had guessed that it was a mutation of the measles, ordinary measles brought on board by one of the passengers, and mutated by some stray cosmic particle six months out from Earth, changing into a virulent and voracious germ that killed swiftly and horribly with excruciating pain.

Out of the original two thousand on board the ship, all but three had died from the disease, and now the dead were all gone, shot into space. George's wife, Alice, had been one of the first to go. He had wandered about in a daze until most of those in the ship had come down with the disease and were in one of the several stages of it, so that those who didn't have it could be recognized. During the last five hundred or so deaths George, and Max and Frieda, had found each other and stuck together for mutual courage. Now they were alone in the immense ship, the sole remaining passenger, and the ship's psychiatrist and wife.

"Well," George said vaguely, "what'll we do now?"

It was a good question. None of them knew how to turn the ship back toward Earth or alter its set journey. In five years the ship would reach Alpha Centauri and settle down on the fourth planet at a pre-set spot. Until then they were the ship's prisoners irrevocably confined.

"It's too soon to answer that question," Max said sharply. "We aren't out of the woods yet. One of us, or all of us may still die of the disease."

"I hope it's me," George said. "If it has to be anyone it should be me."

"It won't be any of us," Frieda said. "If we were going to catch it we would have by now."

"Maybe," George said doubtfully. "Well, if you two will excuse me, I think I want to go to my stateroom and be alone for a while."

"Nonsense," Frieda said. "We're in this together and we should stick together. Going off alone would be unbearable."

"No, Frieda," Max said. "George is right. I think we should sit down soon and make some sort of permanent arrangement on how we should live from now on. We have five years ahead of us, you know."

"Oh, there won't be any trouble," Frieda said. "We are all civilized people, we'll— Just what do you mean, Max?" Frieda gasped. "Are you implying . . . ?"

"I'm not implying anything," Max said. "I just said we should sit down and have a talk soon, and frankly discuss our problems. As a psychiatrist—"

"I don't think I like what you are insinuating, Max," George said. "I loved my wife."

"I'm not insinuating anything," Max said patiently. "I'm just saying—"

"This isn't like you, Max darling," Frieda said. "You're being unfair to George. And me. What do you think I am?"

"Skip it," Max said. "We're all upset right now. We can discuss it later when we're calm."

"I don't see what there is to discuss," Frieda said. "I'm surprised at you, Max."

"I think I'll go to my stateroom *if you don't mind,*" George said, walking past them and leaving them alone.

Frieda glared angrily at her husband. "I certainly think," she said, "that you owe George an apology when you see him again."

"Let's calm down a bit, honey," Max said soothingly. "I'm not being jealous, I'm merely trying to bring a certain problem out into the open where we can face it with healthy attitudes."

"What problem?" Frieda said, looking levelly at him.

"A perfectly clear problem," Max said, "of a man who will be around a woman for the next five years, not married to her, not able to be affectionate with her because she has a husband. Right now it's no problem. That's why right now is the time to discuss it, understand it, because in six months it can be a real problem and we—all of us—should be prepared for it."

"What are you suggesting?" Frieda said. "That you two share me?"

Max's face flamed. He said in a quiet voice, "I'll kill him if he so much as lays a hand on you. I mean it."

"So that's the problem," Frieda said, looking at her husband strangely. "I thought *you* were the psychiatrist."

"Can't you understand that I am," Max said.

But Frieda had turned away from him and stepped through the doorway into the corridor. With an injured expression Max watched her go, then followed more slowly. In the corridor he saw her ahead of him before the curve of the corridor cut her off.

He hurried to catch up with her but she was gone. She had turned off somewhere. He began looking in open doorways for her, finally calling her name over and over with varying tones, at first pleading, then demanding, then pleading again. He didn't find her, she didn't answer.

He stood irresolute, debating whether to continue the search. Then, sighing, he went toward their stateroom.

An hour later she came in. "I didn't have any cigarettes with me," she said, ignoring his welcoming smile. She went to the storage drawers and obtained a pack, jerking it open with angry motion. When she had the cigarette going she plunked herself down in a chair, still ignoring Max.

Max watched her, his smile fading and being replaced by a struggle against suspicion. Finally he said, making his voice very casual, "Where'd you go?"

Frieda turned to glare at him. "Why ask?" she said. "If I tell you I was with George you'll think I wasn't or I wouldn't come right out and say so. If I say I was by my-

self you'll think I was with George and am lying about it. So why ask?"

Max sighed. "Maybe you're right," he said. "I guess it's pretty impossible to look at this problem facing us with any degree of detachment. I'll drop the subject."

"Good," Frieda said. "I hope you keep your promise."

"But dropping the subject doesn't eliminate the problem," Max said.

"I know it was too good to be true."

She sighed again, then gasped, startled, as the phone began to ring. Max jerked to an erect sitting position. They both stared at the instrument on the wall as it ended its first ring, was silent for three seconds, then began to ring again.

"It must be George," Max said. "I'll answer it."

"Maybe he doesn't want to talk to *you*," Frieda said, "The way you acted."

"Well, he'd better want to talk to you," Max said. He went to the phone and flicked the *sound only* button. "Hello," he said.

"Max," George's voice sounded, "I just want to say this one thing. I understand your problem and I have the solution to it. I'll stay strictly to myself, and you two do the same. From now on, so far as I'm concerned, I'm alone on this ship. There's plenty I can keep busy at. During the next five years I intend to study."

"Fine," Max said. "I'm glad that you, at least, understand the problem. Just stick to that and there won't be any trouble. I plan on doing some intensive studying myself. Frieda and I will stick to ourselves and you stay to yourself. It's a deal."

He turned off the phone and faced Frieda with a smile. "There," he said, "It's settled. There'll be no problem."

"I'm glad you're happy about it," Frieda said. "There may be no problem, but that's no answer to it."

"Certainly it is," Max said. "All we have to do is stick to it."

"And what will I do while you and George are studying?" Frieda asked.

"You can study with me," Max said. "In five years you can be as good a psychiatrist as I am."

Frieda lifted her eyebrows, but made no answer.

Editor's note: *Though the catastrophe which struck the* S. S. Blackstone *was unique in the history of space travel, the situation resulting from it was not. To date there have*

been ninety-three instances of two men and one woman stranded alone within the confines of a spaceship for a period of years. The one involving Dr. Max Jensen, his wife Frieda Jensen, and George Harwell was the forty-third such case, though the only one for which one of the parties concerned was a trained and highly competent psychiatrist.

It is a highly disconcerting fact that in none of the known ninety-three cases to date did all three persons come out of it alive. That also includes the one we are portraying. In sixty-one instances one of the men was murdered, either by the other man or by the woman. In five instances one of the men became a suicide. In only fourteen instances did the woman die, three of them by suicide, two at the hands of her husband or husband pro tem, nine being killed by the other man. In nine of the remaining cases there was only one survivor, the chances of survival being distributed equally, three being the husband, three the wife, and three the other man. In four instances there were no survivors.

The present case is of interest because it involved a trained psychiatrist and because he was well acquainted with the past history of the situation he found himself in. It would seem that if any sort of answer to the basic problem involved could be found he would have found it, yet he did not. Perhaps the essential hopelessness of the problem is best stated in an excerpt from his notes. He states the following:

"It is three weeks since that day we thrust out the last body, and Mr. Harwell and I agreed he should remain isolated from us. I see now that it was a mistake. I've seen that almost from the beginning, but even now I know of nothing that would not be a worse mistake. Every conceivable solution to the problem is incompatible with the physical, emotional, or ethical complex of at least one of us, leading to an intolerable pressure that must produce an explosion or be dispelled by a new arrangement before that point is reached. Five years is too long a time. I know, at this point, that no permanent answer can be found which does not involve the death of one of us— George, of myself, or— Yes, I will say it. Frieda."

Shortly after he wrote this the crisis came that put an

end to the first temporary solution.

Max dealt the cards, humming softly to himself. The score pad lay at his elbow, neatly columned. Frieda glared at him from lowered lids while he dealt. "For God's sake stop that moronic humming!" she exploded suddenly.

The humming stopped. Max continued dealing the cards until there were two piles of ten. He turned over the top card on the remainder of the deck and placed it in the center of the table, and the deck beside it. "I'm sorry, darling," he said. He smiled at her cheerfully and picked up his cards.

Frieda glared at him a moment longer, then scooped up her cards and transferred her glare to them. The next instant she threw her cards violently, then picked up the deck and threw it so that it struck the wall.

Getting up, she went to the door.

"Where are you going?" Max asked quickly.

"Out," Frieda said. "Where do you suppose I could go? Out. I want to be alone."

Max's nostrils flared. "Are you sure you want to be alone?"

"That's what I said," Frieda said. "For three weeks I've done nothing but stare at your silly face, listen to your damned humming. I'm sick of it."

"I didn't know I hummed so much," Max began, but Frieda had slammed the door and gone.

Max slowly picked up the cards. He counted them and found one missing. He searched for it and finally found it across the room. He put the cards away, looked hesitantly toward the door, finally went to it and opened it, looking both ways in the corridor and seeing nothing. He came back into the room, leaving the door open. Chewing on his lip worriedly he inserted a microfilm spool in the viewer and turned it to the first page of a book. He tried to concentrate on what he read, but was unable.

Finally, with an angry movement, he shut off the projector and left the room. He made his way directly to George's stateroom. He lifted his hand to knock, then changed his mind and pressed his ear to the door, listening. It was in this position that Frieda discovered him when she came along the corridor.

So intent had Max been that he didn't hear her ap-

proach. She stood at his shoulder for a minute, anger mounting in her. Suddenly she slapped him, so forcefully that the marks of her fingers stood out on his face.

Caught completely by surprise, unaware that anyone had been near him, he staggered away, almost fainting. When he saw her he was steadied for a minute, then filled with shame. "I guess I should be ashamed," he mumbled. But immediately after, the shame was replaced by triumph. "So you were coming to see George!" he said. "Only I got here first!"

"That isn't true," Frieda said. "But what if it were? Is it a crime to want to talk with someone? I would welcome a cockroach as an improvement over you the way you've been acting lately."

Max sagged in resignation. "You're right," he said. "It can't go on this way. I was wrong. Let's go to George together and invite him to have his meals with us and play cards with us in the evenings."

Frieda shook her head. "And have you glare at him if he so much as looks at me?" she said. "You've turned me into a prisoner, Max. Do you know that? If George was with us you wouldn't turn your head for five minutes without being convinced we were in each other's arms."

"I won't," Max promised. "I—I'll have trust in you. But promise me this—if George tries anything with you let me know."

Frieda hesitated. "All right," she said. "I promise." Her expression softened. She went to him and put her arms around him. "Oh, darling," she said. "Why do you have to be such a fool. I *love* you. Remember?"

With his arm around Frieda's waist, Max knocked on George's door. A moment later it opened and George stood there. He blinked at them, bringing his thoughts back from wherever they had gone.

"Oh, hello!" he said happily. He grinned. "I've been hoping you'd get over this separation idea," he said. "Come on in." When they were inside he shook his head wonderingly. "You certainly make a fine couple," he marveled.

Max cleared his throat self-consciously. "Frieda and I," he said quickly, "have decided that if you would like, we should all eat together. And perhaps once in a while you

could drop in evenings and we could play cards together."

Editor's note: *It is interesting to note that the termination of the first temporary solution to the problem was accompanied by a general feeling of exhilaration and well being by all three. It is also worth noting that, though that first solution had become intolerable for Dr. and Mrs. Jensen, George Harwell had found it quite satisfactory. Filled with memories of his recently departed wife, at peace with himself, he had plunged into several branches of study, and during those three weeks he had progressed in each to the point where it was a growing and dynamic mental structure that gave him pleasure. If at times he had grown lonely and wished to break the agreement, the wish had been mild.*

The period of the first temporary solution had prepared George Harwell to appreciate and value the period of the second temporary solution. Not so, Dr. Jensen and his wife. Dr. Jensen's jealous suspicious had gained a certain momentum of their own which could not be destroyed by an act of will, and Frieda Jensen's increasing irritation with her husband during that first period also had gained a momentum of its own, which, under the new state of affairs, gradually turned to dislike of her husband under the constant and automatic comparison of the two men in her mind, and its natural balance against Max and favoring George.

Our staff of consulting psychoanalysts are in agreement that during this second stage Frieda began to turn toward George not so much from any attraction toward him as from a growing revulsion against her husband.

From Dr. Jensen's notes it is evident that he was fully aware of this. He states, in his notes, "Poor Frieda. I'm afraid that, whatever the eventual outcome, she is through with me. I have been under too unfavorable a light with her from the start. She is turning away from me because of a growing dislike for me, and turning to George because there is no other direction to turn. There is danger there, but I don't dare to point it out because my motives would be misconstrued and precipitate a final break. What can I do? I know how things are developing, I know I haven't much more time in which to debate without acting. I have three possible

courses. I can precipitate the coming crisis by pointing it out, in which case I fear that isolation would result, only this time it would be I who stayed alone, while George and Frieda remained together. Second, I could pretend to be unaware of what must surely happen if nothing is done by me to stop it, and let it run its course. Finally, I could kill George some way, either openly or by trying to make it appear suicide or accident, if such is possible. With George out of the picture completely, Frieda would inevitably turn to me completely. But I fear I am utterly incapable of cold-blooded murder so I must choose between the first two paths. Perhaps I can disorient myself enough from the problem to permit the middle road and hope for the best." Dr. Jensen had three more days after writing this to make up his mind which course he would take. Our staff of consulting psychiatrists is in disagreement on this subject. Two views are held. The first, and one which your editor feels most inclined to agree with, is that under such a situation a man could make a decision violating his basic ethical instincts only on the conscious and intellectual level, *and that on the level of action the basic ethical instinct would take over. The second view is that Dr. Jensen had definitely decided to take the first course, waiting for a dramatic moment in which he could appear justified in driving George out of the picture and into confinement again. In any case, the crisis was reached on the afternoon of the eighth day of the second temporary solution.*

George sat in a corner chair in their stateroom, staring into space, lost in his own private thoughts. Frieda sat across the room, occasionally glancing at George, sometimes glancing toward her husband Max who was intently reading a book from the microfilm projector. It was an utterly peaceful scene, the last to occur among the three of them. It had been thus for over an hour.

Abruptly George got to his feet, stifling a yawn, and started toward the door.

"Where are you going?" Frieda asked.

George paused, smiling at her. "Thought I'd go to the library and pick out some more microfilm rolls. Want to come along?"

"Love to," Frieda said, jumping to her feet. She turn-

ed to Max. "Want to come along, Max?" she asked. Perhaps her voice was just a trifle shrill, a bit too forced in its casualness; perhaps Max only imagined it.

"Not right now," Max said with elaborate disinterest. He had not looked up from his reading.

Frieda looked at him thoughtfully for a brief second, then joined George with a mental shrug and a bright smile. They left together, closing the door softly behind them.

Max straightened up, staring at the closed door, his nostrils flaring. He stood up and glided toward the door swiftly and silently, hesitating a brief moment, then turning the knob silently and inching the door open. He saw them fifty feet along the corridor, and as he watched they reached out as though by mutual consent and took each other's hand, continuing to walk along together.

He followed them cautiously, never letting them get quite out of sight. They were talking, but only an occasional word was audible to Max. When they reached the microfilm library room and went in they left the door open. Max ran swiftly to stand beside it. After a second's hesitation he boldly peeked in, prepared to say he had changed his mind and would join them, if he were seen.

He couldn't see them, but their voices came from a file section several yards away. Risking discovery, Max stole into the room and hid in an aisle close enough to hear what they were saying.

"I can't get her out of my thoughts," George was saying. "I see her face when I close my eyes, even now."

"Poor George," Frieda's voice came, tender and soothing. "I feel so sorry for you. I feel like holding you, comforting you as though you were my very own." And after a long silent minute, "Comfy?" Frieda soothed. "Scoot down a little more and lay your head on mama's breast, my little lamb."

Max remained where he was, his fists clenched until the knuckles were bloodless.

Suddenly George's voice sounded, startled. "Oh, what have I been doing? Please forgive me, Frieda. I meant to. . . ." His voice dwindled away as though muffled.

"Don't you know it is a woman's place to comfort?" Frieda's voice came dreamily. "We're doing nothing wrong. Let yourself relax. You're too

tense. Let me give you warmth." Her voice became a hoarse whisper. "Hold me tight, my poor darling. Kiss me, oh kiss me."

For almost five minutes there was no sound except George's occasional gasp as though he were short of breath. Then came Frieda's voice, low and urgent. "No! Don't do that, George. You mustn't!" A moment later George panted, "But how can I keep from doing that when you. . . ." His voice ended on a muffled note. Frieda's voice came, "It's all right, darling. There's no use our trying to fight it. Let me go a minute while I take this off."

Max, his face white with rage, stood still another moment as though counting in his mind. Then he stepped out from his place of concealment and went forward on silent feet. He reached the aisle in which George and Frieda were concealed and stopped, unnoticed by them.

"So!" Max exploded, his voice shaking with emotion. While George and Frieda stared up at him, frozen into immobility by surprise and unbelief that he could be there, he leaped forward. He kicked viciously at George's upturned face, seeing teeth come loose and blood spurt from bruised lips. He seized Frieda's wrist and dragged her with inexorable force while she tried to keep her feet and stumbled over the impediment of her loosened clothing.

When they reached the stateroom he locked the door, and then proceeded to beat her systematically with slaps and blows designed to humiliate more than to injure, saying over and over, "You! You! You!"

Finally he stopped, physically and emotionally exhausted. He stood glaring down at her contemptuously. She lay on the floor, huddled up, whimpering.

Editor's note: *Thus ended the second temporary solution, and entered the third. Dr. Jensen had placed himself in a most secure position, relatively speaking. As the outraged husband he had played his role sincerely and with perfection, driving home the deep humiliation and sense of guilt that both his wife and George Harwell inevitably had to feel. Mrs. Jensen now had no defense against her husband's charges that his suspicions were justified. Confused by the complex intermixture of natural*

desire and pity that had motivated her basically, filled with a sense of guilt, she reacted by seizing on the fear that Max could never forgive her as a modus operandi upon which to cling for sanity.

George Harwell had lain stunned and humiliated in the library for a good ten minutes before he could latch onto a course of action in his mind and begin to follow it. His first impulse was one of revenge and murder. He got up and fought the dizziness that possessed him, staggering out of the library and along the corridor back to the Jensen stateroom where he tried the door and found it locked, pounded on the door and demanded admission without being heard, and finally stood there, a pitiable spectacle, listening to Frieda's cries of pain and shame, and Max's shouts of anger and unhappiness.

Finally George Harwell slunk away to his own stateroom, convinced that it was entirely his fault. After all, hadn't Frieda objected? Resisted? What a heel he had been, he convinced himself. Frieda had tried to comfort him and he had taken advantage of her. This conviction grew in him until it dominated his thoughts completely. And by its very intensity it burned itself out in a period of two days, and was replaced by the slowly coalescing forces of rationality, rationalization, and protective hatred. Where before he felt he could not possibly live in the same universe with the man who had exposed him to total shame and must therefore kill himself, now he felt he could not possibly live in the same universe with the man who had debased him so utterly, and must therefore kill him.

Therefore temporary solution number three lasted only forty-eight hours. By its very nature it could not endure. It would have been possible for Mrs. Jensen to live with it indefinitely, adjust to it. It would have been possible for Dr. Jensen to live with it on a plane of self justification that would give him satisfaction except during moments of clear introspection. But it was incompatible with the nature of George Harwell. Therefore it could not endure.

The fourth temporary solution had to be attempted. Returning to the ninety-three instances of the problem of two men and a woman on a spaceship, it is interesting to note that only one of the five

suicides was by a man in Mr. Harwell's psychological position at this point. Since the crisis of temporary solution number two occurred in most, if not all, the ninety-three cases, in all those cases the man in Mr. Harwell's position must have determined to kill the other man. Not all of them succeeded. The results of their attempts varied . . .

Max was sitting at the microfilm projector, half way through the book he was studying. Over four years later when the ship reached its destination that page was still in the projection position. It had been there now for less than ten minutes.

Frieda was sitting dispiritedly at the table playing a game of solitaire, making many mistakes at it, unable to concentrate. When the knock came a swift smile flashed over her face and was immediately suppressed, but the hope that leaped into her eyes could not be banished by an act of will. It remained. She glanced quickly at Max.

Max had straightened, looking toward the door. An expression of strain appeared around his mouth. Fear lurked in the depths of his eyes. Finally he shrugged and said to Frieda, "Ignore it. He'll go away when we don't answer it."

As though in answer the knock sounded again.

"Why don't you answer it, Max?" Frieda said. "We can't stay locked up in this room forever. Besides, he could break the door down some way if you don't face him, sooner or later."

"It's too bad guns aren't on the ship so decent people can defend themselves against such scum," Max said.

"Maybe he's come to apologize," Frieda said, knowing that she didn't believe it, not knowing what she wanted to happen.

"Him?" Max said incredulously. He went to the door and shouted, "Go away. We want nothing to do with you. Leave us alone."

There was no answer. Had George gone away? Frieda's lips trembled. She didn't want him to go away. She didn't know what she wanted, but not that. Max must open the door! She said in a wondering voice, "Max! You're afraid!" She saw him flush and a reckless daring possessed her. She laughed. "I would never have believed it!" she said. "Max, a coward! I still can't believe it." She sobered and looked at him curiously. "Are you?" she asked.

"There's a difference between being a coward and being a damned fool!" Max shouted at her.

"Is there?" Frieda said quietly, suddenly knowing what she wanted to happen. "I read someplace once that only a coward hits a woman." She reached up and touched one of her bruises gently, looking at him.

"I'm no coward!" Max shouted. "I'll show you!" He twisted the lock and pulled open the door, and without waiting for George to recover from the unexpected movement advanced with flailing fists, catching him on his injured mouth and crumbling the protective scab.

Dazed, George stumbled backward against the corridor wall. Max followed his initial advantage without pausing. George tried to roll away from the rain of blows and finally, in desperation, half fell half leaped out of the way, landing on his hands and knees.

"By God I'll finish you now!" Max grunted, rushing forward.

George, with an instinct born of football days, lurched forward, meeting Max's rush low with his shoulder, catching a painful blow against his cheek at the instant he felt his shoulder connect.

Max fell to the floor. He gasped, trying to breathe. George's shoulder had caught him directly in the solar plexus, paralyzing it temporarily.

George stood up and shook his head to clear it, then bent over Max and picked him up by his shirt front and hit him on the nose, feeling it crunch, seeing it go sideways against Max's cheek. Still holding him up, George hit him several times, carefully, purposefully, in the eye twice, in the mouth several times. Then he flung him away. Max lay where he landed, looking up at the towering figure of George, the soul gone from his eyes, pitifully spent and helpless.

Frieda paused in the doorway, glanced at Max, then turned to George, rushing to him. "Oh my darling, are you hurt?" she cried anxiously.

George stared at her dully for a moment, then a smile grew on his bleeding lips. "No, I'm not hurt much," he said. He reached out a clumsy arm and put it around her shoulder, drawing her to him. She clung to him for a moment while George looked down into Max's eyes with grinning triumph and contempt. Then he turned away,

and he and Frieda went away, arms around each other for mutual support.

Max watched them go, not moving from where he lay. For a long time he didn't move. Finally, with a shuddering sob, he crept painfully into the stateroom and closed the door, succeeding in getting it bolted. After that he slumped to the floor and cried.

Editor's note: *In view of the other ninety-two cases on record we can state that it was unimportant whether George killed Max at this point or did as he did do, the end result for Max was the same, for Max killed himself, unable to live with the consciousness of his defeat and the certainty in his mind that Frieda had turned her back on him contemptuously and gone to live with George. He left no suicide letter. He made no entry in his notes concerning his intentions. So he was one of the five men who committed suicide out of the ninety-three instances of the problem we are discussing.*

George and Frieda did not discover Max for two weeks, and by the time they did he was a badly decomposed corpse dangling from an overhead beam in the pilot room of the ship where he had had to go to find something to loop his rope over.

The shock of seeing her husband there undoubtedly was too much for Mrs. Jensen's mind. That is understandable. She and George Harwell settled down to a rather peaceful existence that was interrupted only by Mrs. Jensen's periodic spells of hysteria and irrationality. Almost eight months to the day from the time these three unfortunate people found themselves together, alone, Mrs. Jensen returned to her former stateroom and wrote a note, then slashed her wrists. George Harwell found her there a few hours later.

When the S. S. Blackstone *reached its destination and set itself down, George Harwell was found locked in his stateroom, immersed in the studies he had returned* to *after Mrs. Jensen's death. He was unaware that the ship had landed. He seemed amazed that the trip was ended, stating that he believed it had two or three years to run yet. He talked quite freely, seemed pathetically glad of human companionship again.*

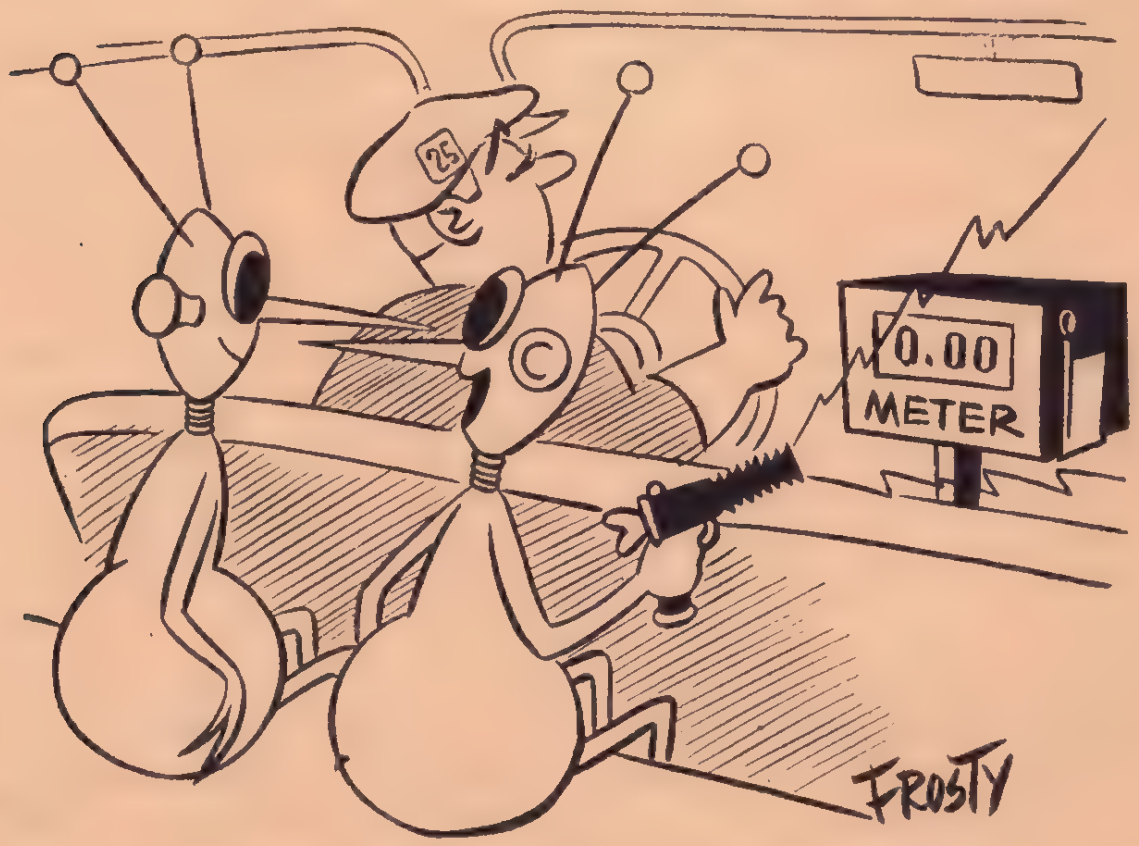
He was placed in a sanitorium so that his recovery could be properly supervised.

For several months he seemed to improve steadily, but his retreat from life had become too complete to rectify. Eventually all attempts to bring him back to reality were given up and he was transferred to a permanent ward where he was permitted to lose himself completely in the complexities of his studies. He died at the age of one hundred and eighty-three, after having been in the sanitorium one hundred and fifty-seven years.

For over a century and a half he remained, a living monument to the insolubility of one of the problems of life. the problem of two men and one woman alone in the confines of a spaceship for a period of years; haunted by fear —spurred by jealousy.

If there is a solution to this problem, it has yet to be discovered. The best minds in the known universe have pondered it for centuries—without finding an answer.

THE END



"Look! I can make that adding machine subtract!"

TOOL OF THE GODS

By LAWRENCE CHANDLER

A freak twist of fate made Wilson Crandall the most important man in the world. But good things don't last forever. Would Crandall be able to function again as an ordinary mortal?

THEY had plundered a marble quarry to build the Xanadu that was Wilson Crandall's home. Yellow-veined *Lumachelle* from France stretched across his front hallway in neatly-butted squares. Columns of fine *Carrara* rose to exaggerated heights in his living room. He liked the ringing sound of marble beneath his feet, liked the smooth cool touch of it beneath his hand.

On his sixtieth birthday, the Eugenic Government presented him with a brace of marble statuary. One of the figures was of himself, and the sculptor had successfully chiselled his craggy face, his fine aquiline features, his tall, proud body with its muscular arms and chest.

The other figure was Woman. Its contours were molded with infinite softness. When placed in correct juxtaposition, its face was raised to Crandall's statue in supplicant adoration.

The presentation ceremonies were impressive as usual. A choral group of several hundred Crandall offspring sang their song of tribute. The President of the Eugenic Government unveiled the statues, to the oh's and ah's of ten thousand Crandall mothers and Crandall children.

But when the crowds had departed from the vast green acreage of his front lawn, Wilson Crandall was sad.

He placed a call to his good friend, Alfred Newman, who was one of the fourteen staff

Murder blazed in the old man's heart as the guards dragged Joel away.

physicians assigned to his exclusive welfare.

Newman arrived right after dinner. He found Crandall sprawled wearily in a pneumatic armchair in the living room, sipping some fine Estonian brandy.

"Well," he said, striding across the marble floor. "This is a fine way to spend a birthday."

"I wanted to be alone," Crandall said. "But I've been thinking too much, brooding. I thought we would play a game of chess."

"Good idea," the doctor said, with strained enthusiasm. He was a ruddy-faced man with a fixed jolly expression, who had resisted the idea of hormones and pigmentation-pills, and allowed his seventy-five years to show on his lined face and in his sparse white hair.

Before one piece had been moved on the marble chessboard, Crandall said:

"I've been thinking about the statue, Alfred. It's not a very good likeness."

"Really? I thought it was excellent myself."

"Your eyes are failing. You and those ghouls of yours examined me last week. I don't have the body of a boy any longer. You know that."

"Well, a little artistic licence—"

"I'm sixty years old." Crandall picked up the ivory King and turned it in his fingers. "Let's face it, Alfred."

"That doesn't mean a thing these days, Wilson. You're in your prime. The last sperm count we made of you was excellent. There'll be forty-five to fifty thousand Crandall children born in the next four-month period . . ."

Crandall shrugged, and they began the game. They played silently, until Crandall cornered the doctor's Queen with an elaborate knight-bishop-pawn trap. Newman resigned with a laugh, saying:

"The all-powerful Queen. What would the game be worth without her?"

Crandall looked at him sharply, but the doctor's eyes were blank.

They sat in deep, understanding silence for a while, and then Crandall said:

"There's no hiding anything from you, you old fox. You know what's troubling me. It's that girl."

"You mean Celeste?"

"Of course I mean Celeste," Crandall grumbled. The sound of her name on his lips brought her golden image to his mind. Celeste, of the yellow streaming hair and the

thin, pinched, lovely face. Celeste, whose cool young body was as distant and aloof as the marble statuary that now graced his living quarters. He struggled to erase her picture from his brain. It wasn't easy.

He had selected her for the signal honor of being the temporary mistress of Crandall. Selected her himself, instead of depending upon the offices of the snickering young government agent who called himself "Crandall's pimp" behind his back. He had seen her at one of the many Crandall ceremonies, in the silken white robe that signified her status as a virgin, not yet of an age to bear Crandall children. She had accepted his offer; indeed, she wasn't sure whether the choice was hers.

Celeste was only one of some thirty women who had shared Crandall's personal life. But of all the women who had walked these marble floors, she was the only one who walked in Crandall's mind as well.

"What's wrong with her?" the doctor said, lighting his pipe.

"Didn't you know? Haven't you guessed?"

"No."

Crandall frowned, and sipped at the brandy without tasting it.

"She spurns me, Doctor. Oh, not in some high-and-mighty way. She weeps when I approach her, weeps a salty lake. She sulks in her room all day—and bars the door at night."

Dr. Newman's eyebrows lifted. "Well. I suppose that could be vexing. However, you can always . . ." He made an idle movement with his fingers, signifying with a gesture the ease with which Crandall's appetite could be sated.

"You don't understand. I want this girl here. She means something to me, more than the others have. I've told her that. I've told her that she would be my last mate, that I would never abandon her. But she merely weeps."

The doctor cleared his throat.

"I know what you're thinking," Crandall said. "A foolish old man, infatuated with a seventeen-year-old child. Perhaps you're right, Doctor. But she denies me everything. Even her company." He rubbed his forehead. "Every morning, she hides in her room. Then, when the nurse comes to bring her meal, she finds that she's been sick, vomiting . . ." He looked up.

"Perhaps she's ill. Could that be?"

"Nonsense. She passed a rigid physical." Doctor Newman pulled smoke into his mouth. "Vomiting, you said?"

"Yes. In the morning . . ."

The doctor chuckled. "Well, that's a familiar symptom. It may be, my dear Wilson, that you have brought still another Crandall child into the world."

Crandall put the glass down. "Impossible. I've never gone near the girl."

"Well, perhaps she'll let me talk to her. Women seem to trust doctors. They think we're insensitive machines. If they only knew."

He chuckled again, and reset the chessboard.

The next morning, Dr. Alfred Newman returned to Crandall's marble castle, and subjected the girl named Celeste to some simple medical tests.

When he was done, he patted the smooth cascade of yellow hair, and told the girl to take things easy.

Then he sought out Wilson Crandall.

He found him on the terrace in the east wing of his home, surveying the acres of garden that stretched out limitlessly to the horizon, where the morning sun was bright and strong. He placed his small medical suitcase on a chair, regarding Crandall's strong, rocky profile. Then he cleared his throat.

"Oh, it's you," Crandall said dreamily. "What brings you here so early?"

"I told you last night. I thought I'd look in on your little friend, see if she hadn't come down with some unpleasant bug."

"And?"

The doctor smiled. "Congratulations. You're going to be a father."

"Don't be funny. What's wrong with Celeste?"

Crandall turned to him, slowly. His face, etched against the white glare of the sun, was marble itself.

"That's not possible," he said in a whisper. "You know that's not possible. I told you. She has lived here like—like my own daughter. She has never been to the A1 clinic. She can't be pregnant. Not in this sterile world—"

"Wilson, you're not telling me the truth." Color came to the physician's face. "You can't be. Do you know what you're implying?"

"It's not possible!" Crandall shouted.

The doctor sat down, and his blue-lined hand went to his forehead.

"Unless," he said, shaking his head. "Unless this curse is over. Unless the nightmare is done . . . and the world can be the same again . . ."

"No!" Crandall said. "I won't believe it. There hasn't been a natural birth in two generations. Only a handful of men—myself, Conover in England, those two Russians—"

"Yes, yes, I know. But it could happen! Perhaps it has happened." He stood up.

"Where are you going?" Crandall said.

"To talk to the girl. To find out—"

"Not without me!"

The nurse brought Celeste to them.

"Sit down, my dear," Newman told her.

She cast a frightened look at Crandall, and hid in the corner of an oversized chair.

"Listen, Celeste," the doctor said gently. "You know those little tests I made this morning?"

She nodded.

"Well, I have some news for you. You're going to be a mother. Do you understand me?"

She stared at him, vacantly.

"I know what you're thinking. You've been brought up to believe that you could bear only Crandall children. And I myself have believed that, always. The men of our world are sterile, except for the few who have been spared by Nature's mysterious ways. But it is possible—yes, very possible—that our troubles might end as suddenly and inexplicably as they began. That's why I must ask you a question, Celeste. A very important question."

Crandall leaned forward, and the girl caught his stony gaze and looked away.

"You must tell me," the doctor said. "You must tell me who the boy is."

Her head spun wildly, the golden hair swinging about her face. Her eyes widened, and looked at Crandall's craggy face in unconcealed terror.

"No!" she said.

"You mustn't be frightened," Crandall said, in a choked voice. "You know I have never harmed you, Celeste. You must answer the doctor's questions."

She looked at the floor, her hands clutching the sides of the chair, the knuckles bony and white.

"No," she whispered. "I can't tell you."

"It's not your *personal* problem," the doctor said in-

tensely. "You must understand. It could mean a great deal—to know—"

She met his kindly eyes, and clung to them. Then her lips parted, and she answered.

"His name is Joel. Joel Harper."

Then she bowed her head, and wept in either shame or fright or relief.

Wilson Crandall spent the rest of the day alone. He strode up and down the marble passageways of his home, walking swiftly, as if to some destination. He climbed the staircases, his footsteps loud and hurried. He unlocked the glass-enclosed cabinets that held the delicate treasures which had once graced the museums of the nation. He toured the grounds, shaking off the bodyguards assigned to protecting him from the attacks of zealots who believed that no man should live like a god.

Then, as the sun began to descend in his west windows, he summoned a bald-domed servant named Graille, and whispered a command.

Graille departed swiftly. He was gone only an hour. When he returned, he was accompanied by a grim-faced Crandall bodyguard named Briggs, and they were flanking a slim youth with a pale frightened face and challenging eyes.

"Is this the boy?" Graille asked.

"I don't know. Is this Joel Harper?"

"Yes," the boy said defiantly. "What do you want?"

The bodyguard raised a hand, as if to punish the insolence. Crandall stopped him.

"Let's not do anything like that. I just want to talk to you, Joel."

"What for?"

Crandall forced himself to smile. "We have something in common, you and I." He waved his hand, and the two men left the room. "Let's sit down and talk."

The boy looked uncertain. Then he found a seat on the other side of the room, and sat down tensely.

"Tell me something," Crandall said. "Do you know a girl named Celeste?"

The boy's smooth face darkened. "Yes," he answered.

"And you like this girl?"

"You know I do!"

"And do you know what's become of her?"

"Yes!"

Crandall folded his hands in his lap. "I suppose you are very angry. I suppose you entertained some dangerous thoughts about me, when you

heard about Celeste and myself. Is that true?"

"Maybe."

The older man smiled. "Then I want to put your mind at rest. Your Celeste has lived here with me under the same conditions as my own daughter might . . ."

The boy's lip curled. "She is your daughter."

"Of course. Just as you are my son. Now tell me the truth. Should there be such animosity between a father and a son?" His tone was anything but paternal.

The boy stood up, squaring his shoulder.

"It's not that simple. You're not really my father. You're only a biological freak—"

Crandall's face grew bleak. "You're wrong, you know. The world is the freak. I am normal."

"Where's Celeste?"

"Would you like to see her?"

He slumped back to the chair. "No," he said wearily. "Not now."

Crandall leaned back and regarded the boy. He studied his face, searching for resemblance to himself. But as always, he could not find, could never seem to find his own youth in the faces of the children his sperm produced. It was like a penalty . . .

"I want to tell you something, Joel. I've changed my mind about Celeste. She's spoken to me about you, and I cannot, in all conscience, stand in her way."

The boy looked startled. "What do you mean?"

"I mean I'm letting her go. Back to you, if that's her wish. Will you feel better about me now?"

"Gosh, Mr. Crandall. Of course. I mean—I never really thought—"

Crandall chuckled. "Yes, I know. You never thought I was really a monster. But let's erase all hard feelings, son. Tonight." He got up and walked to the wall. His finger stabbed a button.

Graille appeared, his bald head shining, his eyes hooded.

"Yes, sir?" he said.

"I think now," Crandall smiled.

Graille came towards the boy.

"What are you going to do?" Joel said.

Crandall's smile broadened.

"Erase all hard feelings," he said.

Graille's hand closed over the boy's mouth before he could shout. Crandall turned his eyes away.

"Wait!"

It was Newman, the doctor whose movements in and out of the Crandall home were never questioned by the guards. He walked rapidly towards them, and Graille, surprised, released his hold on the youth.

"What do you want?" Crandall said ominously. "Why do you bother me now?"

"Leave the boy alone." The doctor's face was pained.

"It's not your business, Doctor."

"It is! Because you're making a mistake—"

Crandall's face was stormy. "I am Crandall."

"That doesn't give you the right—"

"Graille!"

"No, wait!" Newman cried. "You don't know the truth, Wilson. You don't know the facts—"

"What facts?"

"About him. About the boy."

"What about him?"

"He's no threat to you, Crandall. In no way is he a threat."

"You're lying!"

"I'm telling you the truth! I found him before your thugs did! I examined him—"

"What?"

"Do you think I would lose a minute? If there was any hope that the world could be normal again? No, Wilson. I searched him out, and brought him to the laboratory. That's why I know. He's no threat, Crandall." The doctor's shoulders slumped. "He's sterile. Like the rest of us . . ."

"Then the girl lied!" Crandall thundered. "It's someone else!"

"No. The girl told the truth!"

"Then how? How could it be possible?"

The doctor sat down, and the soles of his shoes scuffed the marble tile beneath his feet.

"Nature has found another answer," he said softly. "Another way . . ."

"What do you mean?"

"Spontaneous conception. Childbirth without fatherhood. Celeste is only the first, Crandall. There will be others . . ."

Crandall stared at him, and his roar of defiance resounded through the corridors of his home.

He stomped from the room, and hurried up the curving staircase to the second floor.

His hands struck the doors of Celeste's quarters with violence.

She was sitting near the window, with folds of cloth in

her lap. There was a needle in her hand, and it was darting swiftly in and out of the fabric.

"Oh!" she said. "You frightened me."

He stood there, gaping at her.

"I—I was just doing a little sewing," she said shyly. "I thought I would surprise you, with some curtains for the window. This room is so cold. All this marble . . ." She shuddered.

Then she rose from her chair, smiling for the first time since she had entered his home. She gathered the material in her hands and brought it to the marble-framed window overlooking the gardens. She held her work up to open air, a delicate thing of frills and ruffles.

"There," she said contentedly. "Won't that make it nicer?"

"Yes," Wilson Crandall said, moving as if in a dream.

A breeze came through the window, and the curtain flapped in the girl's hand, like a triumphant banner.

But Crandall's mind was elsewhere. *So nature is discarding me,* he thought. *Crandall—unemployed.* He smiled in contentment.

THE END

"Arak! You've picked up a new kind of skin rash!"

How did the little street musician make a vicious dog disappear into thin air? How did he get out of a locked jail cell? What did he need with dozens and dozens of violins? Why was Officer Metcalf ready to blow his top?

WHO STOLE CARNEGIE HALL?

By G. L. VANDENBERG

THERE are those who would tell you, like Lieutenant Randall at the Forty-ninth precinct, that I am a dumb cop. Such would be a gross distortion of fact.

I been a cop for twenty-two and a half years, walking the beat on 57th Street between Sixth and Broadway.

There was only one guy who had been on 57th Street longer than me and that was Castor. And he wasn't a cop. If he had been a cop maybe I wouldn't be in the pickle I'm in. And maybe Lieutenant Randall at the Forty-ninth precinct wouldn't be recommending that I have my noodle examined.

Castor was a shabby little beggar violinist; a great little guy with lots of heart. He was the only panhandler I never gave the bum's rush to because, you see, he wasn't really a panhandler. I mean he was a music lover. Longhair.

And that's where him and me basically disagreed. I mean they could have torn down Carnegie Hall and used the bricks to repair the Great Wall of China for all I cared. I wouldn't have paid a lead nickel to watch Kostelanetz conduct a singing band of angels. I just didn't care much for classical music.

Anyway, the night all my troubles began I was walking the old beat on 57th Street and as I passed Carnegie the crowd was just letting out. Dutywise it was a very normal evening. Nothing happened. So I stopped next to Castor who was playing his

There were dozens of questions Castor didn't feel like answering.

fiddle to beat hell, and we had our usual post-concert chat.

"Well, Castor," I said, "you only got three more performances and so long, Carnegie Hall!"

His fiddle was a homemade job with more gadgets on it than an old-fashioned typewriter. And if there were still some people coming out of Carnegie he always kept playing while he talked. "That's right," he answered as his right hand moved the bow back and forth in a frenzy. I think he was working himself up to a crescendo or something like that. "So long, Carnegie Hall," he repeated, "but perhaps those who would tear down this monument to beautiful music will be in for a little surprise."

"What're you talking about?"

"Officer Metcalf," he said, "I have made up my mind. They are not going to tear down Carnegie Hall!"

"What's going to happen? You going to buy it and take it home with you? You been saving dimes?"

He was a little speck of a guy and he must have been pushing a hundred! He had worn the same grimy fedora for twenty-two years and maybe longer. And a moth-eaten woolen overcoat with six broken pockets; in each pocket there was a tattered Dixie cup for contributions. He was poverty ridden.

"Look, Castor," I said, "why do you get so upset about this thing, anyway?" I sure didn't want to hurt his feelings. I mean he may have been a little nutty on the subject but him and me had become good friends and a little thing like Carnegie Hall shouldn't ever come between friends if you know what I mean. "They're going to build a new concert auditorium in the Lincoln Square project. You can go over *there* and listen to the music. You don't want to stand in the way of progress, do you?" I beamed at him, knowing I'd made a good point.

About that time the last few of the artsy clientele was leaving Carnegie so Castor stopped playing and gave me the fish eye. "The crimes that are committed in the name of progress!" he wailed.

As a matter of fact, I was worried about what would happen to Castor after Carnegie Hall had seen its last days. I mean here was a guy I really liked. I don't think he had ever done any harm to anyone in his whole life.

Anyway I had visions of

poor Castor dying of a broken heart. Because no matter what he thought there wasn't a single way he could have prevented old Carnegie Hall from going the way of all buildings, to coin a phrase.

So before I knew what I was saying I was giving Castor the idea of coming to live with me after Carnegie was gone. And when I got to thinking about it it wasn't such a bad idea. I mean he may have been a little decrepit but he was clean and polite. You see, I'm a bachelor and I always have been. So there was no problem about getting anybody else's approval. And, after all, Castor was not about to go to that new concert auditorium in Lincoln Square and play his homemade fiddle there. There's such a thing as pride, you know. I told him I wasn't getting any younger and that a companion would be just the ticket for me.

Well, after I made him my proposition he started to give me an answer and I thought it was going to be a long involved one. But he never did get his answer out because right then we was interrupted. And that's when it happened. . . .

These two very ritzy looking characters approached Castor and they had a great big boxer dog with them. The dame was all decked out in jewels and satins. She gushed at the sight of Castor. I mean you had to know Castor to realize how pathetic looking he really was. He could look as sad as a dying duck in a snowstorm.

"Oh, Jonathan!" said the dame to the guy on her arm, who was also wearing four thousand dollars worth of rags, "Jonathan, give this darling little man some money!"

Her escort stifled a yawn and flipped Castor a half a buck. Big deal.

"Will you play something for us, little man?" the dame was still gushing in a high falsetto.

I don't know, if I had been Castor I think I would have stuffed the half a buck in her teeth. But he just made with his weary little smile, "Certainly, madam, what do you wish to hear?"

"Well, let me see now!" She put her long thin index finger to her mouth and burned a few wires thinking about it. "How about the *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* by Saint-Saens?" She turned and threw a smug look at the guy who was probably her husband, although you could

never tell about those things on my beat.

Castor said, "Whatever you wish, madam," and started to raise his violin. It was then that the dog got into the act. I guess he must have thought the violin being raised meant his mistress was about to get clouted over the head, which wouldn't have been a bad idea at all.

Anyway this big bone polisher began to strain at his leash and growl at Castor. And he scared the daylights out of the little violinist. Castor lowered the violin and bow and held them in front of him as though they could have protected him if that vicious mutt ever got loose.

About that time I decided I better get things under control. I mean with Castor shaking like a leaf, the dame yelling orders to her boy friend and the dog about to yank the boy friend off his feet. When I went to the guy to help him hold the dog, all of a sudden the leash came loose.

"Blast you!" the rich guy said to me. "Now look what you made me do!"

"Take it easy, bub," I said to him. "I'm sorry, I was only trying to help!"

"Well, you succeeded in botching things up! Why don't you mind your own business!"

I'd have pinched him right then and there if it hadn't been for the rich dame suddenly screaming her lungs out.

Needless to say me and the guy both turned to see if there was a fire or something.

"What the devil's the matter with you, Harriet?" asked her escort.

"Oh, Jonathan," she wailed at the highest pitch possible, "it's Beauregard! He's gone!"

"Gone? Gone? What on earth are you talking about?"

"Our Beauregard, Jonathan. He's gone! Just disappeared. That little man is responsible! He's a magician or a sorcerer of some kind." She tugged at my arm. "Officer, don't just stand there. Do something!"

Jonathan, who was looking all over the street, chimed in with, "Yes, don't just stand there. Do something!"

"Our Beauregard is valued at two thousand, three hundred and forty-seven dollars," the dame said, spitting every word in my eye.

I don't know whether the price was right but the mutt was certainly gone. A minute ago he had been there and

now I couldn't see hide nor hair of him.

"Now you listen to me, Officer. My Beauregard was standing right in that very spot," she pointed to a spot about a foot in front of Castor, "and suddenly he vanished. Right into thin air. I demand that you have this little scoundrel return my dog!"

I turned to Castor, who was shaking pitifully. "Castor," I said, winking at him, "give the lady back her dog."

All poor old Castor could mutter was, "He was going to bite me."

Seeing him all scared like that made me sore.

"You must be mistaken, lady," I said. "Castor here doesn't have your dog. I mean you can see that for yourself, can't you?"

"But I tell you Beauregard vanished right before my eyes! He was responsible," she charged, pointing a finger at Castor. "It was some kind of a trick!"

I really had to chuckle at that one. I said, "Castor, take the dog out of your hat and give it back to her."

Jonathan glared at me. "Are you going to do your duty and get our dog back or are you just going to stand there?"

The joker was lucky I was wearing my uniform because I was all set to pelt him one. Instead I rammed my forefinger into his chest and said, "Listen, mister, I don't know where your dog is. He could be on a hot date for all I know. You don't want the police department, you want the dog catcher."

Jonathan snatched out a pen and took down my number. That made me laugh because he's only about the four thousandth character who's taken down my number. Then he grabbed his wife—or whoever the hell she was—by the arm and the two of them walked off swearing they'd have my badge and that's putting it mildly.

When they were out of sight I told Castor, "Come on, old friend, and I'll blow you to a cup of coffee."

He looked up at me with his big round, innocent eyes. "Thank you, Officer Metcalf, but I think I will go home and rest now. Maybe tomorrow night?" Well, just the way he said it, so simple and kind of sincere, made you know guys like Castor just ain't for sale. They're more like magic charms and you kind of like to hang around them hoping some of their magic will rub

off on you. Anyhow, that's the way I felt about him.

We walked to the corner of 57th and 7th Avenue and I said, "I don't blame you for being shaken up. That was a ferocious looking mutt." Speaking of the mutt got me to thinking about the dog again. "By the way, Castor, what the hell *did* happen to the dog? Which way did he go, did you notice?"

Castor started to explain, "He was going to bite me and I couldn't let him do that, so I . . ."

"Of course you couldn't," I said, "but which way did he go? How'd he get away so fast?"

He decided not to answer my question because at that point he said, "Good night, Officer Metcalf," and toddled off downtown on Seventh Avenue.

And, you know, for just a minute I thought my mainspring had come loose. Because as Castor walked away I could have sworn I heard Beauregard—I mean the dog—yelping miserably, as if he was locked up somewhere and couldn't get out. I scratched my head and watched old Castor raise the violin to his chin and begin to play his way down the street. . . .

The next day I was called on the carpet in Lieutenant Randall's office. He gave me hell.

"Bullets, where were you hiding when they were giving out brains?" Everybody at the station called me Bullets including Lieutenant Randall. It was a nickname the boys stuck with me. "Do you know who those people were you met in front of Carnegie Hall last night?"

"No," I answered, after which I beamed because I was kind of proud of what I was going to say next. "But I know they got a pedigreed boxer dog worth two thousand and . . . ah . . . some odd dollars and . . ."

"Do you know who the two people are?"

I thought for a second he was going to explode. "Well, no," I shrugged, "but I ain't ever going to find out if you keep screaming at me like that. "One thing about Randall. You had to put him in his place right off.

"They are my aunt and uncle, that's who!" said Randall. "And that pedigreed boxer dog has been kidnapped and I want him found! Alive! Understand?"

Relatives! I had really goofed! "Well, geez, Lieutenant, I sure am sorry about that dog

but there ain't very much I can do about it."

"I got a full report about your behavior last night, Bullets. Maybe you'd like to walk your beat wearing a false nose and eyebrows like a *real* clown, huh? My uncle is certain his dog was confiscated by a beggar violinist named Castor. I want that guy brought in for questioning."

"You can't do that, Lieutenant!"

"Don't tell me what I can't do! I can have you broken! And put out to pasture if I want to!"

"Look, Lieutenant, I can vouch for Castor. He's been on the beat longer than I have. Hell, he wouldn't . . ."

"Go out and find that little beggar! Bring him here! !"

"Yes, Lieutenant. I'll do what I can."

Well, what could I do? Either I had to turn in a sweet and harmless old guy or get thrown off the force.

That night Castor and me had our usual post-concert chat. Then I told him I would have to haul him down to the station. I mean I really hemmed and hawed about telling him, too. I was embarrassed and ashamed at such a rotten job; taking a defenseless little creature in front of a jackal like Randall. I felt inhuman!

But Castor never even blinked an eye. Just told me it was okay with him because he had done nothing he should be ashamed of.

So off we went to the Forty-ninth Street precinct, with Castor playing the Introduction and Rondo-whatever-it-was all the way over.

The session between Castor and Lieutenant Randall was really something. At one point I had to stick my fist in my mouth to keep from breaking out in complete hysterics.

The lieutenant took Castor to a little room and stuck him under the old shaded light, just like in the movies. And I never seen old Castor look as pathetic as he did sitting there waiting for the third degree. He had his fiddle and bow across his lap and a faint smile on his face. Then the lieutenant lit into him.

He gave the little guy a verbal beating the likes of which yours truly has seldom encountered. I mean he was acting as though that dog was his brother or something, which wasn't outside the realm of possibility when you came right down to it.

He raved and ranted and waved his arms and fists and

kept shaking a warning finger at the old guy. He was getting nowhere and blowing a gasket doing it.

I had to admire the way Castor just sat there as relaxed and sincere as he could be. In answer to every question he said, "I was frightened that the dog would bite me." A pretty simple answer, I thought, but to Randall it was frustrating.

"Okay! Okay!" he finally screamed, "you've said that a dozen times! Come on now, you bum, you knew the dog was worth money. Where are you hiding him?"

"It wouldn't have been right for the dog to bite me. Don't you agree, Lieutenant?" Castor's voice was gentle as a raindrop.

Randall tugged at what was left of the hair on his fat head. "All right, all right, never mind!! I've had enough! Book him, Bullets!"

"What for?" I asked with vast indignation. I really resented his order. "We can't prove he stole the dog."

"I know that, you idiot! Book him for vagrancy."

"Vagrancy!" I shouted. "He ain't no vagrant. Hell, I'll vouch . . ."

"You'll shut up and do as I tell you!" Randall was pacing the room. "I can't prove it but I know he's got the dog. It's written all over his face. Now book him!"

I swear if Castor hadn't interrupted at that point I'd have nailed Randall to the wall.

"Lieutenant," said Castor, still calm as ever, "I'm afraid I won't be able to stay here with you."

Randall's eyes popped. "What the hell do you mean, you can't stay? I'm keeping you, that's all!"

"But I have more work to do."

"Don't hand me that, you crumb! You never did a lick of work in your life."

Talk about the pot calling the kettle black! Thanks to his lousy relatives that Randall was the biggest loafer on the city payroll.

It was the first time I ever saw so much as a speck of anger in Castor's eyes. It only lasted for a split second and then he got control of himself again.

"I'm very sorry, Lieutenant, but I have worked very hard for many years and now I must finish the most important part of that work the day after tomorrow."

"What's happening the day after tomorrow?" Randall inquired.

"They're tearing down Carnegie Hall," I cut in.

"No, Officer Metcalf," Castor said. "They only *think* they're tearing down Carnegie Hall."

This stymied Randall. "Bullets, what the hell is he talking about?"

"Castor is opposed to the destruction of Carnegie Hall," I said, "so he isn't going to let them tear it down." I winked my eye at Randall.

"My God, you're both screwy!" said Randall, taking a step backward.

"Oh, no, Lieutenant," Castor said. "You see, it is all wrong to destroy a sacred thing. Carnegie Hall is a great and beautiful monument to something that is vital to mankind . . . music. It is simply not right . . ."

"Cut it out!" screamed Randall. "You're under arrest! You're going to stay here until you confess to the theft of that dog! Take him away, Bullets!"

I stood there fidgeting for a couple of minutes. The thought of leading that innocent little guy to a cell made me feel like I was about to drown a bag of kittens. You take Randall. One look at that lug and you could tell he was born to be a kitten drowner. I mean he could have drowned a bag of kittens and recited Hi Diddle Diddle without ever batting an eye.

It's kind of hard to describe what happened right after that because to tell you the truth I don't know *how* it happened. I was still trying to get up my nerve when Randall shouted, "Don't just stand there you moron! Take him out!"

All I know is I reached over and took Castor by the arm. Gently, you understand. And he stood up and gripped his fiddle by its neck and suddenly there was this kind of loud whoosh! It was followed by a weird suction sound. And Lieutenant Randall of the Forty-ninth Street Precinct was gone!

Now ordinarily this would have come under the heading of extremely good news. But for him to just vanish like that, right in front of my eyes— I mean if Randall had been kidnapped, which appeared very likely, there was going to be some mad relatives on the city payroll. And yours truly, Bullets Metcalf, was going to be in hot water right up to his clavicle.

I could find nothing better to do than scratch my head. While I was doing it I heard the door close. Castor was

gone. I stayed in the room for a minute on the off chance that Randall might turn up as mysteriously as he had vanished.

It was then that it hit me. Randall must have been right about the dog. Castor did pilfer the mutt! I remembered that moment the night before when I thought I had heard the dog yelping like he was locked up somewhere. The violin was the answer and Castor *was* a magician just like that rich dame had said. I had it all figured out. Sometimes my intuition completely amazes me.

Much as I liked old Castor I couldn't let him leave me in a jam. I didn't have the first idea how the old guy did it but I was determined to find out.

I left the room and passed Mulcahy, the horsey desk sergeant, on my way out of the station.

"Hey, Bullets, where's Lieutenant Randall?" Mulcahy asked me. "There's a call for him."

"He just stepped out for his violin lesson," I said and kept on going as Mulcahy shouted about ten unprintables after me. . . .

I caught sight of Castor rounding the corner of 49th Street and Sixth Avenue. I was right behind him when he caught a train in the 50th Street subway station. I took a seat in the car behind his. He began playing the old fiddle for what few passengers there were at three in the morning. He must have played for about an hour because that's how long it took to get to wherever we were going. About an hour.

To be factual about it I didn't even think to look at the station sign when I followed him out of the subway. I think we were in Forest Hills but it could have been Pawtucket, Rhode Island, except I happen to know the subway doesn't go that far.

Anyway, I followed him for another half hour after that. And the terrain got less residential.

I followed him to the edge of what looked like a meadow. He veered off to his left and went down a path. Toward a little shack sitting all by itself in that great big field. He went inside and in a second the light went on. The end of the trail, obviously, so I went inside and stood there flat-footed.

I'd never seen so many fiddles in my whole life! They were everywhere! On chairs, tables, dressers, on the bed; even the walls couldn't be

seen for fiddles. I mean Castor must have had a corner on the market!

And all I could hear was music; violin music oozing out of every fiddle in the room. And not just one piece either. I mean there must have been a dozen symphonies going all at once with maybe six or seven obbligatos thrown in for good measure.

After I'd been inside for a minute the music became more subdued and I could hear myself think.

"Castor," I said, "I want you should tell me what kind of a gimmick you got with this violin factory."

"Officer Metcalf, I have nothing to hide from you," he said, "you have always been a good friend. But Lieutenant Randall, he was a bad man . . ."

"What do you mean *was!*" Don't ask me why I suddenly felt sympathy for Randall because I just don't know! "He ain't dead, is he?"

"Oh, of course not," said Castor as he fondled one of the violins, "he's right here."

"Right where?" I'll be damned if I could see him.

"Right inside here," said Castor, pointing to that little opening you see in all violins.

I'm not sure but I think at that point I let out something like a gulp. "You mean—you mean Lieutenant Randall is inside . . . that . . . that violin?"

Castor just smiled. "That's right."

"Oh."

"Officer Metcalf, you don't look well. Can I fix you some boullion?"

"What? Oh, no—no, I'm in the pink, no kidding. I—ah—what are you going to do with him?"

"With who?"

"Lieutenant Randall."

"Well, I was thinking of taking him with me when I leave."

"When you leave! Where the hell are you going?"

"Home."

"Oh." It occurred to me that I didn't know anymore then than I did when I arrived. "Look Castor, I don't know how you do it but now you've got to undo it, see? I mean, isn't there some way you can return Lieutenant Randall?"

"Yes, there is," said Castor. He had a very serious, troubled look on his face. "But you see, Officer Metcalf, people like Lieutenant Randall serve no useful purpose in this world. Neither do people like the two who owned the dog."

"That figures," I chuckled.

"It happens the three of them are related."

"It was a mistake to take the dog. I should have taken the owners. But I was afraid the dog might harm me so I'm afraid I acted on impulse. He's really a very lovable pooch. He deserves better than what he had so I am taking him with me also."

"Never mind the dog!" I said. "Just get Lieutenant Randall back."

"But why?" he asked. I mean I really don't think he could see why. "He accused me of being a tramp, a good for nothing. He shouldn't have said that. It is not true. Not at all."

"Well, you see, Castor, he just didn't know you. I mean I can understand how he would get the impression, not knowing you, that you was panhandling. You got to admit your clothes aren't exactly out of *Town and Country.*" I smiled, figuring I had won him over with my observational powers.

"Not enough people in this world know what it is to be dedicated. Lieutenant Randall is one of those people. So I will take him with me and show him the fruits of my labor. When I return him he will be a better man for his experience."

"Hey, where is your home anyway?"

"You have never heard of it."

"Oh, I don't know. I keep pretty good tabs on the old geography," I said.

Castor laughed. I guess he didn't take me seriously. I could see I was getting nowhere on the subject of that crumb Randall so I asked Castor about his so-called work. Frankly I was really skeptical that he had ever done any but, unlike Randall, I didn't care. I mean he didn't have to be a corporation vice-president to be a friend of mine.

Well, I never did get what he was trying to tell me. But I pass it on for what it's worth. It seems he had this job to do because where he came from (I've forgotten the name of the place and you ain't likely to locate it in no geography books neither) people just craved music. You know, like some people crave money. I mean they had reduced this music loving business to a fine science, see? So they had sent about a dozen guys like old Castor out to record the stuff and bring it back (to that place which I can't remember the name of).

He told me he had been sta-

tioned at Carnegie Hall for something like seventy-two years without ever going home. But now that they was going to demolish the joint and he had all the longhair stuff that had ever been played there he was getting ready to hit the trail for home. It seems that, the way his people studied and enjoyed music like it was expensive wine, there was going to be one hell of a celebration when he got back.

There was no question about it. The guy was balmy.

I said to him, "Castor, you mean to tell me that in every one of these fiddles you got recorded a whole concert from Carnegie Hall?"

"Oh, in some I have as many as a half dozen concerts."

"That's plagiarism!" I yelled at him.

"Of course not. There are no such laws where I come from. There, all great culture is enjoyed by the many rather than by the few. Listen, Officer Metcalf!" He monkeyed around with the keys on one of the fiddles and I was treated to something called Beerleo's *Temptation of Faust*. It was nothing to shout about but Castor practically did flip-flops over it. "Isn't the tone magnificent?" he asked me. I was the last person he should have asked. "All of my recordings have that same crystal clear, life-like quality. My friends are going to be very happy."

As he was hanging the fiddle back on the wall a small object no bigger than a postage stamp fell out of it onto the floor. I picked it up. "What's this?" I asked him.

It was the only time I ever saw old Castor blush. "That is a Van Gogh self portrait," he said.

Well, my eyes popped over that one because I *do* know a little something about art. "You don't happen to mean the one that was found missing from the Metropolitan Museum a couple of months ago, do you?"

He nodded.

"You're the one who heisted it?"

He nodded again. He was pretty embarrassed.

"I thought you were just interested in music!"

"It happened in a weak moment," he said apologetically.

I looked at the portrait again. "Holy cow!" I exclaimed, "How did you get it down to this size?"

He shrugged modestly.

"Is—is Lieutenant Randall —this small right now?"

"Uh-huh."

"Now listen to me, Castor, you got to do something about the lieutenant. I'm appealing to you as a friend who is going to be in a pot full of trouble if you don't help me."

"Trouble? I do not understand."

I explained how Randall had a lot of pull on the force and how I was the only other cop in the room when he disappeared and I would naturally be suspected because it was a well-known fact that I hated the crumb's guts.

Like a true friend Castor saw my plight. He was ready to do all he could. "But you must be patient, Officer Metcalf. We will go back into the city together and I will see that the lieutenant is returned. But not until after my work is completed."

"Don't you think you've got enough music to last you for a while?" It struck me he was getting a little greedy.

"I do not wish to record any more music," he said with a gleam in his eye. "I told you how wrong I thought it would be to destroy Carnegie Hall. Therefore I am going to do something about it. But if Lieutenant Randall were free he is the kind of man who would stand in my way. And I must not have any interference."

"What are you going to do?" I was curious as all hell.

He picked up a fiddle and bow and said, "Come. We will go back now."

When we reached the city Castor told me I looked tired and I should get some sack time. To say that I was reluctant would be just about true since I was determined everything should come out okay.

But Castor gave me his word that Randall would be safe and he even offered to throw in the dog as a bonus promise. So I went to my room and slept like a baby.

I was rudely awakened at 11 A.M. by the telephone, which was ringing. Needless to say I answered it.

"Bullets! Get the hell down to my office on the double! You hear me? Right now! !"

Click! It was Randall.

That good old good-for-nothing, bald-headed Randall was safe. Even his uncouth, raspy voice was like music to my ears. Castor had kept his word.

If I'd been smart I'd have bought a newspaper on the way to the station. Then I'd have been prepared for what was coming. But I didn't buy

one, which left me a little unprepared.

Both Randall and the dog were waiting for me. Randall ushered me into that little room where he proceeded to blow his undignified top.

He told me how he had found himself sleeping on a bench in Central Park with the dog at six o'clock that morning. And how he had no idea how he got there. Frankly it amused the hell out of me. I mean you had to know a misfit like Randall to appreciate the full impact of the humor in the situation.

He was madder than a rooster locked outside of a hen coop and I couldn't figure out why. So he showed me a copy of the morning paper. There was this great big headline across the top that said:

CARNEGIE HALL
DISAPPEARS!

He took me in a squad car to the scene of the theft. Old Carnegie Hall was gone all right. There was nothing but a big hole on the corner of 57th and 7th.

Randall wanted me to locate Castor and have him brought in for questioning as a saboteur. That kind of thinking was really typical of him.

I said I didn't know what the hell he was talking about. I never heard of anybody named Castor and least of all anybody named Castor who played a violin. Not in all the twenty-two and a half years I been on 57th Street.

"What are you trying to pull, Bullets!" Randall barked at me. "You know that little heel tried to kidnap me! And now he's sabotaging city property!"

"Sorry, Lieutenant," I grinned at him, "but we can throw out every dragnet we got and we still ain't going to find no violinist named Castor. Too bad, but that's the way the old marble rolls!"

Well, Randall has since had me examined by two police psychiatrists and to tell you the truth the two head shrinkers and me have spent all our time playing pinochle. You see, Randall made the mistake, when he accused me of being screwy, of telling the two psychiatrists all about Castor and this violin he had. That if you weren't careful you would get sucked into. And the Docs looked upon that statement with what you might call a jaundiced eye.

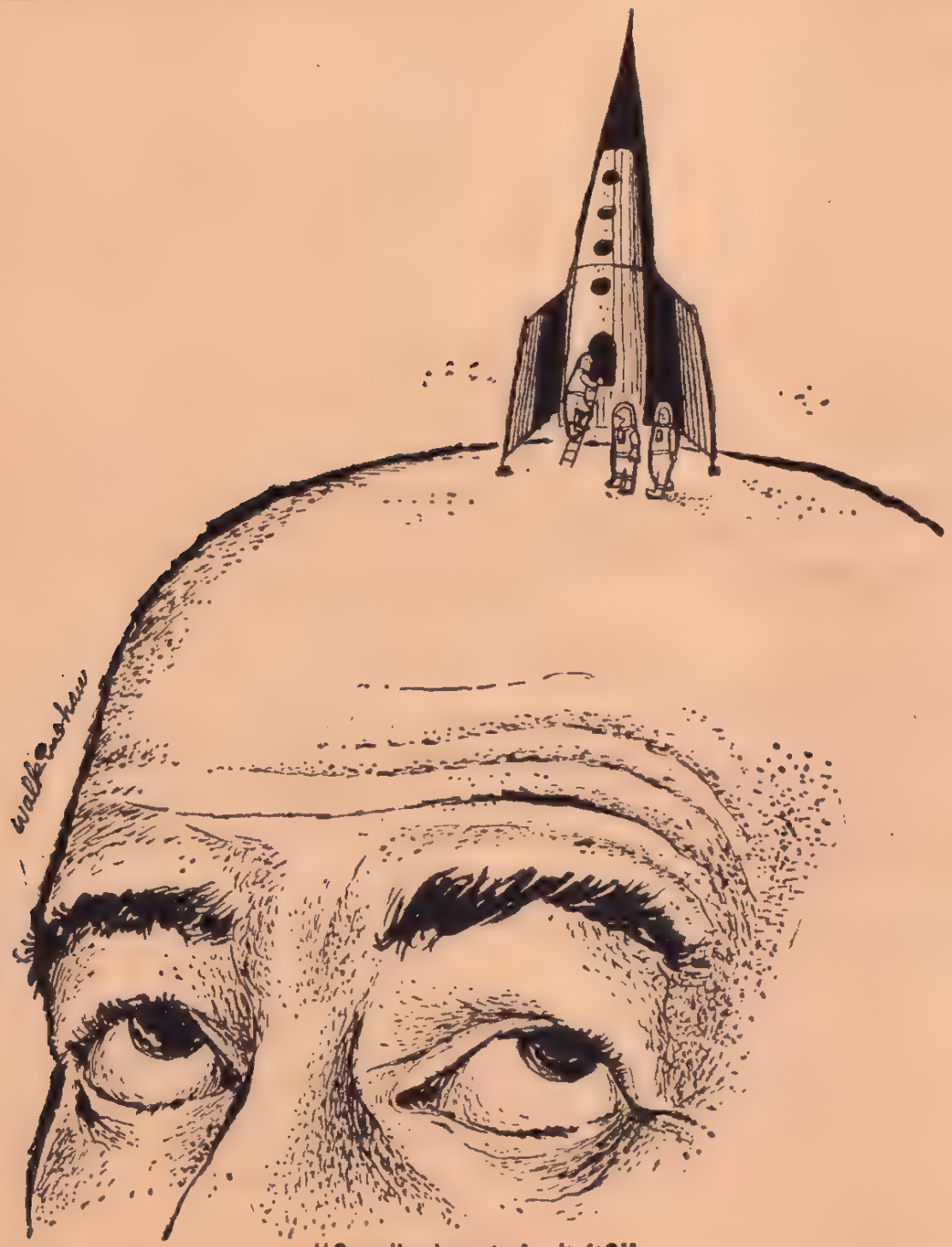
So they're keeping pretty close tabs on Lieutenant Randall these days. His relatives

in particular are worried.

Every once in a while they'll come to me and ask me if I'm sure I don't know nothing about that violinist. But I always tell them I don't. They must think I'm stupid.

But I ain't that stupid. I'm the only one who knows where Carnegie Hall really went to, except I only wish I could remember the name of the place. I'd like to visit Castor sometime.

THE END



"Small planet, isn't it?"

Boost Your I. Q.

Archaeologists aren't the dusty old bores they're cracked up to be; neither is archaeology a dull profession. Far from it. Some of the most exciting discoveries of all time have been made by the boys with the pick axes and pith helmets. If you can dig a 90 score on this quiz, you're better than the editor. If you get all the answers right, you have our permission to contact the Archaeological Society and tell them to send along your medal.

		T	F
1.	The writer D. H. Lawrence was a noted Middle-Eastern archaeologist.	☐	☐
2.	The Hittites were one of the many peoples who inhabited the Tigris-Euphrates Valley.	☐	☐
3.	Egyptian hieroglyphics were deciphered by Champollion with the aid of the rosetta stone.	☐	☐
4.	The earliest civilizations of which we have knowledge flourished around 3000 B.C. in the valleys of the Tigris-Euphrates, Nile and Yangtze Rivers.	☐	☐
5.	Despite their abstract intellectual achievements, the Mayans never developed even so practical a tool as the plow.	☐	☐
6.	Investigations of the ancient Minoans have shown that the legend of the Minotaur in the labyrinth has a basis in fact.	☐	☐
7.	Nineveh, "the wicked city," was destroyed in 612 B.C. by the Egyptians.	☐	☐
8.	The archaeological discovery of Troy tended to further the conclusions of 19th century scholars that Homer was a "pack of lies."	☐	☐
9.	Schliemann only became an archaeologist in middle age after amassing a fortune in business.	☐	☐
10.	The earliest civilized residents of Mesopotamia were a Semitic people called Sumerians.	☐	☐
11.	The pyramids built by the Egyptian kings were intended to serve as living quarters for the spirits in the other world.	☐	☐
12.	The pyramids built by the Mayans were meant for the same purpose.	☐	☐
13.	The cuneiform characters of Babylonia, Assyria, etc., were made with a wedge-shaped instrument on clay tablets.	☐	☐
14.	The earliest civilization in Greece was the Mycenean.	☐	☐

15. The "Towers of Babylon" were part of a system of military defense. ☐ ☐

16. The Dead Sea Scrolls were the work of the period just after Christ. ☐ ☐

17. The story of the Flood has been found in a Babylonian chronicle. ☐ ☐

18. The finding of King Tutankhamen's tomb caused great excitement because it was one of the few in Egypt, almost untouched by grave robbers. ☐ ☐

19. The Etruscan writings give much insight into life in early Italy. ☐ ☐

20. Human sacrifice among the Aztecs was performed by flinging the victims into a well. ☐ ☐

●

ANSWERS

1. False. It was T. E. Lawrence. 2. False. They lived in Asia Minor near Syria. 3. True. The rosetta stone had a parallel inscription in Greek, Hieroglyphics and Coptic script. 4. False. The Indus, rather than the Yangtze where civilization developed later. 5. True. They planted by digging holes with a sharp stick. 6. True. The King's palace at Knossos was built in the form of a labyrinth and many pictures found there show that a form of bullfighting was practiced, perhaps as a religious ceremony. 7. False. It was destroyed by an alliance of Babylonians and Medes. 8. False. Schliemann found Troy by ignoring the scholars and using Homer as a guide to the correct site. He also proved that it had existed, which they didn't believe. 9. True. Though archaeology was the dream of his life and especially the finding of Troy, he had to wait and work for over 20 years before he could retire and devote himself to his real love. 10. False. The Sumerians, though the earliest residents of Mesopotamia, were a non-Semitic people. 11. True. 12. False. The Mayan pyramids were temples for all the people. 13. True. Cuneiform means wedge-shaped. 14. True. They were overrun by the illiterate Dorians around 1100 B.C. 15. False. They were temples. 16. False. Just before Christ. 17. True. It was deciphered from millions of fragments of clay tablets by George Smith. 18. True. All the well-known tombs and pyramids had been completely despoiled over thousands of years by families of grave-robbers who passed on their secrets from generation to generation. King Tut's had been covered by sand. 19. False. The Etruscan writings are still undeciphered. 20. False. That was the Mayan way. The Aztecs tore out the living heart of their victims.

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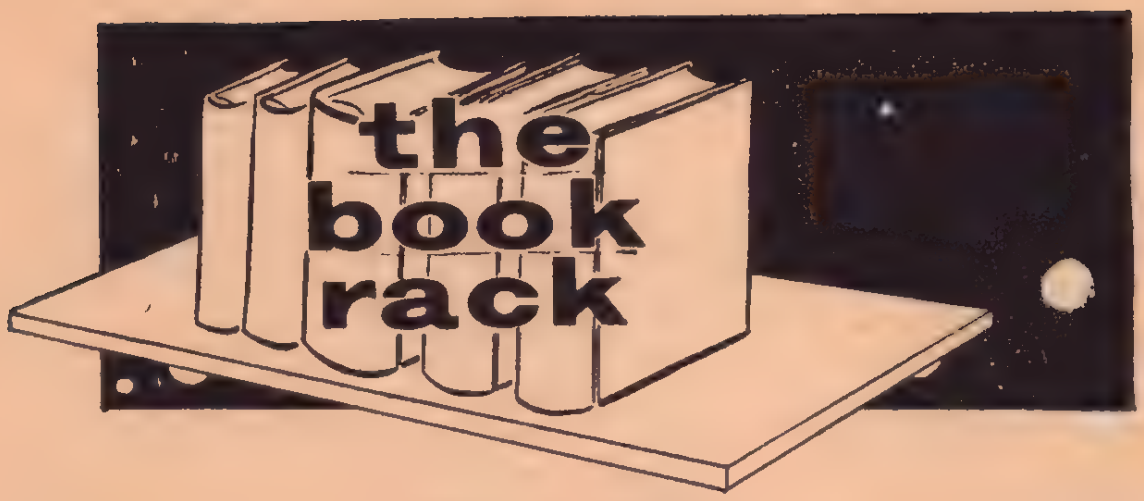


BY S. E. COTTS

SEA SIEGE. *By Andre Norton. 216 pp. Harcourt, Brace and Company. $3.00.*

What a rare pleasure it is to read a really first-class s-f story and Miss Norton has certainly come up with one. Here is a book that is good on so many different levels that it ought to appeal to almost any fan There's action galore and a topnotch suspense story. The plot is a plausible one in spite of voodoo, ghost ships and sea serpents. The descriptions of undersea life are beautifully detailed. And rarest of all, the science parts are well integrated into the story line instead of the all too common sandwich treatment—a layer of story, a layer of theoretical explanation, etc.

Griff Gunston and his father are on the island of San Isadore in the West Indies where the latter is working on a government project. Soon the quiet island is beset by unrest as many baffling questions arise that even Dr. Gunston cannot answer. Why was the Red Plague, the fish disease that Griff's father was investigating, radioactive? Why were so many island ships found abandoned? Why were the octopi banding together in large groups and acting with such a high degree of intelligence?

Then the state of tension between the East and the West blew up in an atomic war. All radio stations were silent. Was there still a world existing outside of the island? In the desperate struggle for survival that followed, Dr. Gunston's group, the Navy personnel from a hush-hush base on the other side of the island, and the natives forgot their differences and worked together as they realized that their peril was twofold: not only from the sky but also from the sea.

It might be said that the climax at the end of the book is a little too much "in the nick of time," or that Griff as a character is not

as developed as he might be (though there are some finely drawn characterizations of the native islanders). But such criticisms wouldn't be quite cricket in the face of such an all over fine job from an author who consistently maintains the same high standards.

GUNNER CADE. *By Cyril Judd. 198 pp. Ace Reprint. Paper: 35¢.*

Gunner Cade is an excellent book; yet it contains as many of the elements of an historical novel as it does of an s-f one. On the one hand we have a colony on Mars, space ships, radionic devices, and paralyzing gas guns. On the other hand, the kind of tradition that steeps the whole story is reminiscent of a novel of the middle-ages. We find Commoners and Starborne court aristocrats separated from each other by rigid codes of dress and custom. Then there are the Mysteries, religious-like organizations each with its own signs and litanies, suppressed by the Emperor, but flourishing in secret none the less. Also, the Order to which the hero belongs is a combination of features some of which we associate with Knighthood and some with the Clergy. This Order consists of professional soldiers who fight according to a strictly prescribed ritual and who live in Chapter Houses according to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Yet all the action takes place 10,000 years from now. What sounds like an incredible mixture is really a pleasantly off beat story.

Gunner Cade was a dedicated man, a member of the Order of Armsmen which had served the Emperor for 10,000 years since the beginning of the worlds. It was written in the Klin philosophy that it should be so, that all men should serve the Emperor. Cade was a model gunner in every way until he was erroneously reported dead in battle (the glorious end that all gunners prepared themselves for). Then as he began living "behind the scenes" he saw corruption and bribery where he had been taught to believe there was goodness and truth. In this mockery he saw that the Klin philosophy limited people instead of allowing them to fulfill themselves.

On the surface this is a fine adventure story. There are some points, however, where the shifting loyalties become both confusing and annoying. But one is willing to put up with these inconveniences because under all the excitement, Cade's story is that of a human being trying to find a new ideal to serve.

CRISIS IN 2140. *By H. Beam Piper and John J. McGuire. 120 pp. Ace Reprint. Paper: 35¢.*

Crisis in 2140 is one of those sad cases in s-f where the idea has tremendous potential and excitement but the realization of it is

very garbled and disappointing. Here is a seemingly Utopian world where atomic power has become a reality, where helicopters are commonplace. Yet nine-tenths of the population are Illiterate, and choose to be, for Literacy is held to be directly responsible for war.

However, in spite of the excellence of this unifying idea, the plot takes us into needless complications involving a senatorial campaign, a department store sale with an ensuing riot that resembles a gang war, and a half dozen main characters who shift loyalties and change identities with every new chapter. Of these, the most interesting is Chester Pelton, the senatorial nominee and a diehard Illiterate.

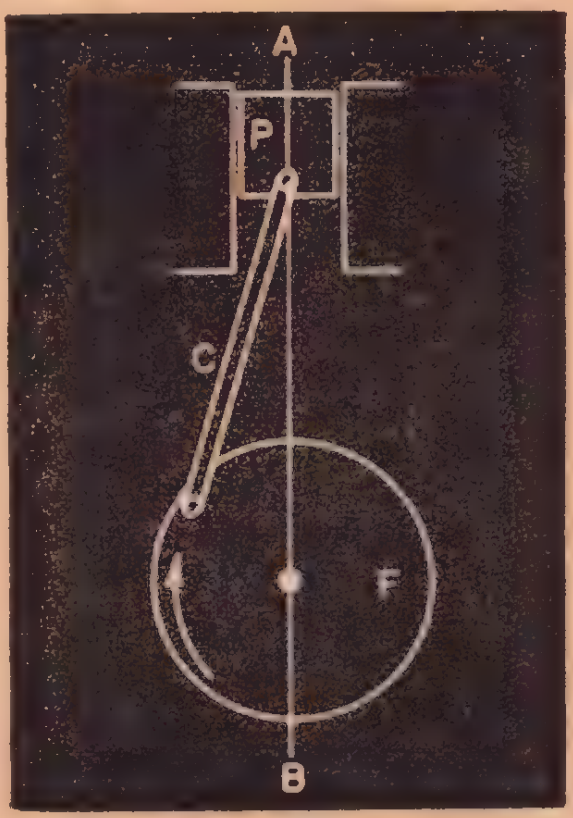
Although the idea embodied in the resolution of the book is sound, one wishes it had been more skillfully handled throughout. Audio-visual education had developed to the point where it was no longer necessary to teach reading and writing in the schools. But eliminating the necessity for something does not eliminate the desire for it, and human curiosity is very strong. So it is only natural that an underground of Literates arises who realize that the solution is not stamping out knowledge, but making better use of it.

Answer to Piston Problem on Last Month's Editorial Page.

"P" is a piston moving up and down in a cylinder, being connected by con-rod "C" to flywheel "F," which is rotating at a constant speed.

Question: Does "P" stop at the top of the stroke before it starts down? (Since this is a theoretical problem, we will assume there is no play in the bearings and that the rod "C" has no stretch or compression in it.)

The answer of course is "NO," it cannot possibly stop and the answer hinges on an elementary rule of geometry, namely that a line has only one dimension—length. Since our center line "A B" has no thickness, it takes zero time to cross it. Therefore the con-rod, and the piston which is fastened to it, are either going UP or down.



ACCORDING TO YOU...

BY THE READERS

Dear Editor:

As I expected the August issue of *Fantastic* was another hit. Every story was an exciting piece. I loved "The Coffin Run" best of all. Plenty of true deep space adventure.

What's gotten into some of our fans stating that the stories in *Amazing* and *Fantastic* are becoming too sexy? I'll be darned if I can see any sex in the stories. These fans must be digging a little too deeply themselves, reading into the stories.

As you correctly stated, sex is a part of our daily lives. Remember, Freud stated that sex is the hub of all human existence.

W. C. Brandt
1725 Seminary Ave., Apt. N
Oakland 21, Calif.

● *Word is out that Freud is just another one of Ivar Jorgensen's pen names, but we take no stock in the rumor.*

Dear Editor:

This is the first time I have written to your magazine but I have been reading it since it was published in pulp form. Through the years I have noticed definite improvements in the stories and illustrations. The whole magazine has become more refined. This year more than ever it has taken on more of a meaning to me as I spend many lonely hours manning a lookout tower in one of the national forests. I thought "Gods Also Die" was one of the best stories you have published.

I wish to add my clamor for more "Johnny Mayhem" stories.

They are the cream of stories and sequels. They catch your eye right off if you have ever read any of them.

Richard F. Harper
Butte Falls Ranger Station
Butte Falls, Oregon

● *There's a brand new "Johnny Mayhem" coming up in* Fantastic's *big-brother mag,* Amazing Stories, *very shortly. Watch for it!*

Dear Editor:

Thanks a million for introducing me to a new world of reading pleasure. Recently, baited by the large prehistoric monster adorning its cover, I bought a copy of *Amazing* and have been a science fiction addict ever since.

I have enlarged my scope with other magazines, but your publications still come first in my opinion. Being one of the "meek" myself, both "Inheritance" and "Traveling Man," in the August issue of *Fantastic,* appealed to my nature. "Call Me Zombie" and "Phoenix Treatment" were also quite commendable.

Harold Ewing
1068 Elm
Long Beach, Calif.

● *We're getting lots of letters from new readers, lately. Welcome to you, Mr. Ewing—and to all the new fans who are joining us.*

Dear Editor:

I always said you would never catch me writing to an editor but here I am and the reason is that I am fed up with those chronic gripers who are forever writing to you.

Heaven only knows I don't like all the stories in any magazine. No one possibly could, and no human editor could ever hope to please everyone.

And these people who are forever hollering make me so mad I could shout. I ask them could they do better? If so put up or shut up!

When I get a magazine that I don't particularly care for, I figure I'll try again next month, because I know you fellows are doing your best to please and you certainly deserve an A for effort.

And while I'm at it I'll get something else off my chest. It's these idiots running around screaming, "Oh, for the good old days," and "Science fiction ain't what it used to be." Well, I say you're right. It isn't—it's better! So there. Let's quit the complaints. What's gone is gone! Sure there were a few good stories in the 30's and

40's, but there are still good stories. The trouble is they can't see them for the tears in their eyes crying about the old days. As Scrooge said, "Bah, humbug!"

If a person is prejudiced he can't see a situation clearly. If these people would dust out their cobwebs and really give the new science fiction a clear unbiased look, they would see s-f hasn't lost a thing but has gained a whole lot. It's grown-up. Sure everyone loves a roly-poly baby but it takes a mature mind to like mature things and that's what s-f is to me, mature. I say three cheers for it.

C. J. McAdams
4216 Ingersoll
Des Moines, Iowa

• *And we say three cheers for C. J. McAdams. Naturally we would. We're biased.*

Dear Editor:

I've been reading s-f for about five months. *Fantastic* was the first science fiction magazine I read and I've been sticking with it.

"A Pattern for Monsters" was terrific. It was a perfect example of how a s-f story should be written. You know what the ending is going to be until you get to the end and find out it is completely different from what you thought it would be.

Arnold Diamond
505 E. 94th St.
Brooklyn 12, N. Y.

• *A perfect description of the "Pattern For Monsters" ending, and most aptly put.*

Dear Editor:

I just got the August issue of *Fantastic* and it was tops. First place goes to "Inheritance" with "Tailor-Made Killers" a close second. "Coffin Run" was very good as an exploration of human relationships and human minds. "Traveling Man" was amusing. "Call Me Zombie" was also good, but "Phoenix Treatment" didn't appeal to me. I could tell without reading it what was going to happen.

I also bought the *Amazing Science Fiction Novel* "20 Million Miles To Earth." To my mind it was so much trash, the kind of tripe the movie people label as science fiction. I don't mind action, adventure when it's believable, or even slightly unbelievable, as in the "Conan" or "Johnny Mayhem" stories, but this stuff is too much.

If you publish this, please ask people (unless female) not to write

me. My parents are upset by the fact that three strange males have written me because they saw my other letter. But that's parents for you!

Suzanne C. Moore
401 West Minnehaha Parkway
Minneapolis 19, Minn.

● *Note to strange males: Mind your business!*

Dear Ed:

For one thing I think sex is okay, IF it's made to seem natural and not played up.

For a second thing "Satan Is My Ally" belonged in a science-fantasy magazine not fiction, but it was still a fair story.

For a third thing, how's about getting after that guy I. Asimov (praised be his name) to write you something. If you could I'm sure all of us "Asimovians" would be grateful and would take interest in *Fantastic.*

S. Schwartz
1017 River St.
Hyde Park 36, Mass.

● *From what we hear, Isaac is busy matching atoms in some research laboratory. A great writer.*

Dear Editor:

Your August issue of *Fantastic* rates an okay by me. "Coffin Run," by Lee Correy was a good space opera and "Call Me Zombie" had a very good surprise ending. "Traveling Man" and "Inheritance" were both good stories on the lighter side. "Tailor-Made Killers" was a good story of the not-so-distant future. Only one story I didn't like and that was "Phoenix Treatment." It was too slow moving and its plot didn't carry too much weight.

Mike Ungerman
20 Ross Court
Loudinville, N. Y.

● *"Coffin Run" was our favorite too, Mike, but we liked "Phoenix Treatment," also. Guess we can't agree on everything. In fact, it would be a dull world if we did.*

Dear Editor:

I have been reading s-f for years now but never thought of writing and putting my two cents in. I have been reading all of the

letters in "According To You" and the fact that most of your fans are always beefing about something caused me to write something in your defense.

We can't please everyone but we try, and that's just what you do. As for me I love your magazine. If there's a story I don't care for this month there's always another to make up for it the next month.

Mrs. Adela Luse
1224 Abbott St.
Salinas, Calif.

• *Thanks for the comforting words and the loyalty, Mrs. Luse. We will continually strive to be worthy.*

Dear Editor:

Fantastic usually has a cover that means something. What happened this month (August)? Was it supposed to mean something?

M. Penett
3934 Hudson St.
Seattle, Wash.

• *The August cover tells about three gals tied to stakes while a rough-looking character with long fingernails stands regarding them with pity and wonder. Good-looking gal too!*

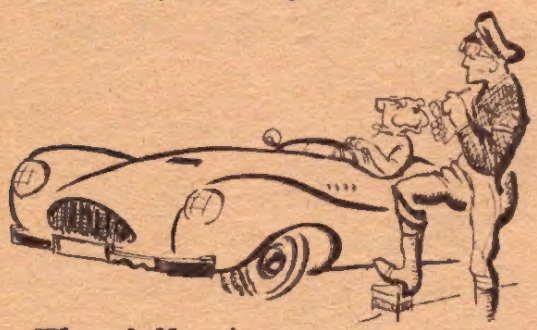
"Doc—this arthritis has tied me in knots."

It Sounds Fantastic, But . . .

Laying Down The Law

Taxicab driver Jesse Dow of New York City was accused of making a taxi medallion from a coffee-tin lid and using it to operate a cab he bought at a junkyard for $125. Medallions are issued by the city license bureau at a cost of $60 a year and are limited in number to 11,785.

An Ontario MPP obtained a driving license for his dog, listing the animal as "a member of my family."



The following gas conservation measure has been adopted in Greece: vehicles whose licenses end in an odd number will be permitted to travel on odd-numbered days of the month; vehicles with licenses ending in an even number will be permitted to travel on even-numbered days.

A householder in Britain who lit a fire to heat the baby's bath water was fined ten shillings for emitting smoke in a smokeless zone.

Schoolchildren at Crickslade, England, haven't an outside door to their classroom and are obliged to enter through the window. The council refuses to make a door on the grounds that the 400-year-old building is an "ancient monument" and it's against the law to alter ancient monuments in Britain.

A Detroit motorist received a ten days jail sentence for throwing a paper bag out of his car window.

In Toronto it's against the law to sweep the sidewalk outside a public building without first wetting the dust.

Bloodhounds are the only dogs whose evidence is accepted in a court of law.

R. S. CRAGGS.

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—continued from Back Cover

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